

Submission  
No 737

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Miss Freya Smee

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Partially  
Confidential

On Wednesday 28 August I went into hospital to be induced, due to my rising blood pressure. The midwife in charge performed a (very painful) stretch and sweep and inserted an artificial prostaglandin called Cervadil. Within an hour I went into hyper-stimulation and began vomiting with 7 contractions every 10 minutes. They were painful, and I had an allergic reaction to the Cervadil which made my insides sting and ache like they had been burnt. I was strapped to a CTG and monitored, but the midwives quickly made a decision to remove the Cervadil and put me into the bath to try to calm down the contractions' speed. I had some Panadeine Forte and continued to labour throughout the night until the next morning. The midwives I had that night were absolutely amazing. They were calm and patient, understanding and sympathetic, and above all, made me feel safe.

I am very thankful to them for the way they supported me that night when I was afraid and overwhelmed, and only wish they had been around for the birth itself. At 9am the next morning a registrar came into the room and broke my waters. My blood pressure began to spike and so the midwives and registrar in charge hooked me up to three separate drips. One with Magnesium Sulfate, one with Hydralazine, and one with Syntocinon. I instantly felt nauseous and began to feel hot, sweaty and sick. I was handed a cocktail of oral drugs, enormous doses of Labetalol and Methyldopa, which sent me into a groggy state of complete confusion. I was pushed into having an epidural in case a caesarean was required and also because my blood pressure was so high, but instead, it lowered my blood pressure far too low, which required yet more drugs to bring it back up again. The registrar anaesthetist failed to insert the needle properly and as a result I was numb from my knees down, confined to the bed, yet was in agony and felt every single contraction. The anaesthetist came back into the room a few times and told me, in an angry manner, to 'press the button honey', which I did, to no effect.

She bullied me and had zero sympathy for my situation. No one had done an internal at this stage, until the doctor in charge (Dr ) came in and performed one, announcing that I was 10cm dilated, could start pushing, and had half an hour to birth my baby. This is when the real horror began. He waltzed in every few minutes and bullied me about 'not pushing hard enough', and threatened me with surgery if he 'didn't see enough hard work'. He spoke to me during contractions whilst I was trying to cope with the pain, his phone went off loudly in the background. Midwives were chatting, there were ELEVEN people in the room (I honestly cannot fathom why this was necessary), and there was absolutely zero privacy whatsoever. Dr popped in every few minutes to give me some thoroughly unhelpful and unsupportive advice about how to push, and point out how I was doing it wrong, before leaving again. After several tests (via pricking scalp), I was informed that had gone into distress and that I had to get her out, now. I pushed as hard as I could but she was stuck. She was delivered via ventouse, and I was given an episiotomy. I hemorrhaged and lost a litre of blood. Several people continued to linger in the room whilst I was in stirrups and feeling completely vulnerable. I felt violated and completely disrespected.

I understand entirely that some of the medical intervention performed was necessary. I do not dispute the fact that I was classified as high risk and thus required some of the procedures that I was subjected to, nor do I blame anybody in particular for the way the birth panned out on a physical level. However, the way I was treated, on an emotional level, particularly by Dr was unacceptable. I was a frightened young woman giving birth to my first child in a high-risk situation. The least I expected was a bit of sympathy and understanding. Not even my lowest

expectations were met in this regard, and the bullying and lack of encouragement that I received instead is still something I cannot quite come to terms with. As a result, I suffered from extreme bouts of anxiety, cried every day for weeks, didn't want visitors out of fear that they would ask me about the birth, and was eventually placed on a mental health plan and received counselling. My relationship with my partner, parents, and relatives suffered, and I was in a state of nervousness and fear for months after the birth. To make matters worse, I suffered from 3 secondary postpartum hemorrhages due to retained placenta. On each occasion, I presented to hospital where I was sent home each time, being told that it was 'just Lochia' and was normal. At 6 weeks postpartum and after uncountable visits to the emergency room and maternity ward at Tweed Hospital I was finally taken seriously and sent to the hospital for a hysteroscopy, Dilation & Curette.