

Submission
No 738

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Ms Eleanor Lambert
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Partially
Confidential

I work as a birth doula and as a Women's Health physiotherapist.

On countless occasions I have heard the experiences of women and their birth trauma, both within the system as a whole and at the hands of individuals within that system.

Numerous women have divulged the emotional scars from being told what was going to occur to their body rather than having consent sought, the manner in which obstetricians have time and time again used the threat of "the dead baby card" to sway women to concede to the choice put forward by the obstetrician, having information withheld in order to coerce the parents to consent to an intervention (calling the fetal scalp electrode a clip, when it is undeniably a screw), and feeling belittled and dismissed in their antenatal care.

One client disclosed to me an occasion where her obstetrician reprimanded her as "a stupid little girl" when the woman disagreed with the obstetrician's directive.

I have witnessed numerous occasions where doula clients have been talked about and talked over instead of being talked to. I witnessed a woman receive a ventouse intervention by a trainee OB -- no consent was sought for the trainee to conduct this intervention instead of the consulting OB.

A close friend and client of mine was advised of an appointment with the endocrine team, however she was not told or advised what the nature of the appointment was. On arriving to the appointment the endocrinologist was unaware why the appointment had been made and was unable to provide this woman with any explanation. Upon taking her blood pressure, the antenatal clinic team then told this woman that she required immediate admission for monitoring of her blood pressure (despite it being noted that she experienced white coat syndrome and regularly had high blood pressure). No one advised this woman that she could be prescribed a medication and discharge home. She was monitored and then told she needed an induction. Throughout the induction process this woman was subjected to multiple vaginal examinations, including an examination she did not fully consent to. Without explanation she was removed from the bathroom where she was labouring, moved into a brightly lit room with multiple medical practitioners and told her baby had fetal distress and she required an emergency c-section. She then waited 6 hours to be taken to the theatre (with her discharge notes clearly stating it was a category 4 section, which does not align with her being told it was an emergency) all whilst under the impression that her unborn child's wellbeing was in danger.

I have supported a client who recalls having her legs forcibly parted by a midwife at
despite having declined the examination multiple times.

On multiple occasions over the last 2 years I have sat and debriefed with women, and their partners, their birth trauma and experiences of obstetric violence.

In my work as a Women's health physiotherapist I have heard 100s of women's experiences of the language used to belittle them, the decisions made for them without their express consent, and the coercion and fear-based tactics used to influence their birth choices and accept unnecessary interventions.