

**Submission  
No 748**

## **INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA**

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I experienced birth trauma with the birth of my second child. She was born at 39+4. She was conceived naturally and I had no complications during the pregnancy other than having COVID at 20 weeks. I went into labour naturally and had no pain medications or interventions. I went through the public system under a midwifery group practice (which I cannot speak more highly of.)

The night I went into labour I had mild cramping through the evening. At 12:30am my waters broke (hind leak) and active labour followed immediately. After 30min I phoned my midwife and she offered for me to come in and confirm it was my waters. I chose to wait 15min and phone her back. By the time 15min had passed, I had woken my husband and we were dressed ready to go as it all seemed to be progressing quickly.

Once we had dropped off our son and driven to the hospital, we arrived at the birthing suite between 2:00-2:30am. I did not have a cervical exam per my request. When I arrived I still felt calm and coherent. At 3:10am I began pushing. My midwives were supportive and let me lead.

At one point while I was pushing I ended up on the floor on all fours in the bathroom. I noticed my midwives discussing between themselves getting another midwife to come in. They then advised that I was bleeding and needed to go out to the bed so they could take better care. I managed this within a couple of contractions with difficulty. My midwives were deciding whether to do a CTG as they were having trouble distinguishing bub's heart rate from my own. At this point they had a look and could see her head. They were happy that she would arrive quicker than intervention would.

My daughter was born at 3:40am floppy. She was whisked away for CPAP and suctioning and was returned healthy to me within a couple of minutes.

Only a few minutes later I began to feel really bad. I had an innate sense of doom within my body and felt really panicky. I couldn't pinpoint what the panic was, I just knew there was something wrong in my body. I couldn't hold my baby and the midwives gave her to my husband. One of my main midwives held my hand and helped to calm my panic. I hadn't noticed straight away that a METcall had been made and the room had filled with people.

I was told that I was having a postpartum haemorrhage and they were trying to stop the bleeding. They believe I had had a placental abruption during the pushing stage and had retained some placenta. The doctor was attempting to remove it in the birthing suite and I requested to have the gas as I had no pain relief otherwise. My husband and I both vividly remember the moment he pushed down on my stomach and a waterfall of blood came out. I remember the intense pain that I had never felt before and the massive gush. My husband thought I was dying. My husband heard the midwives say that I had lost "1L of blood and counting." I couldn't handle the pain of the doctor trying to dislodge the placenta and the decision was ultimately made for me to go down to theatre. When the anaesthetic team had me consent, I was getting more and more delirious. I didn't have much concept of what was happening, I just wanted to pass out. They told me I could end up needing a hysterectomy worst case scenario or end up in ICU. I was okay with either option if it meant the horrible feeling would stop. My husband was left in the room terrified I wouldn't come back and I was wheeled downstairs.

I was drifting in and out on the transfer down. I noticed when I got down there that it had been exactly one hour since my daughter was born and I was devastated that I wasn't holding her. The anaesthetist introduced himself as they prepped me. I heard him yelling at pathology on the phone that he was unhappy my cross match wouldn't be done for another 45min. I also heard them say I had lost 1.75L of blood. They told me to keep my eyes open which was hard until I was put under.

The drugs they gave me made me incredibly groggy. I don't know if I was hallucinating or dreaming in recovery but the room just spun. It felt like I would moving my body around in circles in the bed. I was still very drowsy when they wheeled me back up to the birth suite and it took 2hrs for me to feel awake and strong enough to hold my baby. My husband burst into tears when he saw me. My midwives were so kind and helpful. I was kept in birthing suite overnight and given 2 packs of blood. I spent one more night in hospital. My stitches for my second degree and labial tears were sore on discharge and I had terrible hemorrhoids. I felt like my tailbone was bruised from being stuck in bed on my back for so long.

I had an iron infusion 4 weeks post partum.

The first week or so I kept replaying what had happened in my mind and telling everyone who would listen all the gory details. Overtime it faded. By about 8 weeks post partum I felt physically recovered. Emotionally it's still there now 4months on but I feel much more accepting of it.

I recently had a friend give birth who had zero complications and a quick easy discharge and I felt so disappointed I didn't get that experience myself.

The midwives were incredibly supportive on my home visits and I know I could call them if I needed ongoing support.