

Submission
No 756

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 10 August 2023

Partially
Confidential

Early hours in the morning on the 18/7/22 I was told it was hospital procedure to be swabbed for viruses etc. It was by doing this swab it come back as positive for covid-19, I was not sick, no symptoms and felt well. My husband was required to have this swab due to myself testing positive, he too came back positive with no symptoms and completely well.

We were both told to wear N95 masks at all times. I was told I would need to wear this mask during labour, birth and breastfeeding once baby had arrived. I was not able to breath with this mask on while having contractions and felt I was suffocating so I had taken it off, all drs & midwives working on me agreed this was okay, this was after a midwife trying to put it back on me after taking it off. I felt it was completely inhumane to expect a woman to labour with a mask on.

I would like to commend _____ at _____ hospital who worked solo on delivering our baby on the 18/7/22. My labour and birth experience was fantastic, the care I received while in the birthing unit was great.

18/7/22 I had an epidural and was required to have a catheter inserted.

18/7/22: _____ called for a Dr when I was crowning, the Dr came to the door and I overheard the Dr say “do I need to be here”, _____ birthed my baby on her own. A Dr was called to do stitches after baby was delivered.

After birth I was given the option to take the catheter out around 9.30pm (5 hrs after birth) to sleep. I was not informed that taking the catheter out prematurely would cause me to have severe bladder issues in future.

I was unable to urinate after having the Catheter taken out and it was reinserted. (Trial of void 1)

Once I left the Birthing unit and went into the maternity ward this was where my postpartum care was neglected and my basic rights/needs not attended too.

In the afternoon of the 19/7/22 we were moved to the maternity ward, isolated in our own room due to covid-19 results. All staff were required to gown up, gloves, mask before entering the room. The first night in the ward I was cared for, brought pain relief and ice packs, baby was temp checked and monitored regularly.

My husband and I couldn't leave the room and were not allowed any visitors due to the test results. My husband had to stay in the room with me 24/7 and if he left the hospital he wouldn't be allowed to come back.

The room had one bed (for me) and a regular chair to sit in. I requested an extra blanket and pillow for my husband as he wasn't able to leave, no staff offered a sleeping alternative for

my husband and we received a negative attitude when asking for the extra blanket and pillow for him. The birthing unit had a pull out lounge chair which he had previously been sleeping on. He slept on the Lino floor beside my bed for the night. My husband went without any food for the full duration of his time with me on the maternity ward (1x dinner, 2x breakfasts & 2x lunch). He couldn't take the sleeping arrangements and starving himself he had no choice but to leave the hospital and go home.

19/7/22: Between 6-8pm my baby started having a temperature. We were told not to hold her anymore so she wasn't warm from our body temperature (however baby was very unsettled and didn't want to be put down). Baby was undressed down to a singlet and nappy to lower her temperature, an hour later she still had a temperature and they called in the special care nursery staff to discuss my baby going into special care for testing and monitoring.

By 8pm she was breastfeeding regularly and temperature was starting to lower however the special care staff pushed for her to go into special care, telling me that she could be seriously ill with the worst case being meningitis. The special care staff took her to nicu shortly after 8pm on the 19/7/22. We were told we weren't allowed to visit her while she was in nicu due to covid status.

During the night I was visited by the special care staff requesting I sign and give permission for them to do urine, blood tests and a lumbar puncture on my baby. This was heavily pushed upon me and I was made to feel like my baby's life depended on me signing for permission. I asked if a covid-19 swab had been done to test for covid since both myself and husband had it, I was told they do not swab babies. Whilst being a first time mum I trusted the knowledge of the special care staff and signed permission as they were requesting.

20/7/22: 6.40am was my next verbal update on my baby in nicu. I was told she hasn't had any temperature since being in nicu, was in an incubator isolated in her own room due to the hospital moving the special care nursery into the newly built section and the room not being ready.

Urine and blood tests were taken and they were waiting to see if bugs grow in the next 48 hrs. A lumbar puncture was taken and failed, I was told they would reassess and make a call to try again later that day. My baby was 36 hours old. Antibiotics were given through a drip in her arm as a precaution for meningitis and infections. It was believed that at this time infection was low.

20/7/22: 8-8.30am I was insisting on my baby still getting breastmilk so I was given a bag of syringes and a measuring cup to hand express, I was helped slightly by the midwife on how to hand express but couldn't get the hang of it.

I was not told I needed to label dates, times, baby name and my name on the syringes or any milk being given to my baby, my understanding is that this milk was wasted due to this.

20/7/22: 11.40am I was given a 2nd verbal update. The 2nd lumbar puncture had been done, the spinal sample was being sent to hospital where they test it which would take anywhere between 12-48 hrs to get results back.

I asked for an update on her feeding and temperatures. I was told this person did not know that information.

20/7/22: I had a lot of questions only a midwife or medical staff could answer. I buzzed for a midwife. A midwife came up to my door shouting through the door (which was closed) asking me what I needed, I said I had questions, she replied with "if it's just questions I'll call your phone". She did exactly that. I requested the number for the nicu to get updates on my baby, she gave me a number which was incorrect, I requested it again, this time the phones were disconnected due to the move.

20/7/22: The catheter was taken out and I once again could not urinate despite my best efforts.

I had the cleaning lady come in after mid day to empty the bin and I asked about my breakfast or lunch. I was not brought breakfast or lunch this day.

I waited half an hour before a midwife come in to scan my bladder, by then I was in pain from it being full. I requested the catheter be put back in because I was in pain from having a full bladder and unable to urinate.

Roughly 15 mins went by while the team got the equipment together. The catheter was attempted to be reinserted by a trainee who was being supervised. The trainee was scratching my stitches, trying to insert it too high up and was no where near the opening, by this time I was crying and screaming in pain. I had 2 other nurses come in and tell me I needed to calm down for them to continue, I was in agony from a full bladder and scratched stitches from an already sore and swollen area. The supervisor took over and the catheter was inserted within seconds. 2 litres of urine was immediately drained.

I was given pain relief and left alone.

I had no updates on my baby's welfare, no visits from drs/midwives and was feeling distressed. I buzzed for a midwife to get Panadol and ice packs, I waited an hour to be seen.

20/7/22: 5.50pm the trainee midwife went down to the nicu to deliver breastmilk and took some photos on my phone (which she took with her) of my baby.

My baby had vomited which was running down her face, chin and neck, a bandaged hand/arm where a cannula was inserted and sticky monitors on her chest.

At this time I was told my sister could be with my baby in special care so she wasn't alone, this was if she tested negative to covid and got a whooping cough needle.

20/7/22: I was given a call by the trial of void client in the hospital telling me I would need to come back to remove the catheter I had in after 7 days. At this stage I had no idea I would be keeping it in, no medical professional had communicated anything to me so I was shocked.

20/7/22: A tray of food was brought to the room for my husband (after food hours) due to my mother in law calling to complain. My husband left that night to go home as he couldn't handle sleeping on the Lino floor.

21/7/22: I was visited by the Dr from the night before who told me her shift ended and she wasn't able to tell me I was taking the catheter home the previous day. She explained I was experiencing "spastic bladder" which can happen after childbirth sometimes.

21/7/22 my sister was with my baby day and night so my baby wasn't completely alone in a room isolated. I was able to FaceTime with my baby. I was updated with times she was fed and informed that after a while of visiting the staff told my sister she can do the bottle feeding and nappy changing. It is from my understanding the staff would set up the milk and bottles, check the baby over and leave my sister to care for her, this was all being done through the holes in the incubator.

21/7/22 I was discharged from the hospital leaving my baby behind in nicu. I was pushed to leave due to the maternity ward being relocated that day. I was given rushed instructions on where the catheter bag would sit on my leg, how to strap it on, I could shower with it and pull a lever to release urine from the bag. I was walked by a casual midwife out to a back entrance of the hospital which lead to a car park where my husband picked me up.

I cried the whole drive home.

21/7/22: A family friend contacted me who is a registered midwife, she helped me with questions and I was informed that I should of been given an overnight bag for the catheter as the one I was sent home with (500ml capacity) wouldn't hold the urine from an overnight sleep and could cause severe damage to my bladder.

I experienced bladder pain that night that woke me from sleep due to the bag being full. I was instructed to request an overnight bag when I was able to pick up baby.

22/7/22: My baby was allowed out of the incubator as she was doing well and the room was set up with the pressurising (system where germs wouldn't spread through air conditioning etc) correctly. This information was only known because my sister was still visiting my baby.

22/7/22: Once home, I was finally able to get a hold of the nicu where I spoke to the manager I was told my baby wouldn't be released until they had the results back from hospital for the lumbar puncture, all other tests come back clear. I was informed my baby was

