

Submission
No 763

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Miss Amy-lee Stewart

Date Received: 10 August 2023

Partially
Confidential

Traumatic birth

April 12th 2022

public hospital

I was persuaded to be induced at 38 weeks as I had gestational diabetes (controlled with evening insulin for high fasting levels) and baby was likely to be large and waiting any longer would cause birth complications.

I was initially booked in for April 10th but was turned away upon arrival due to them being too busy & not enough rooms & doctors.

I was induced with balloon on April 11th - all went ok here, balloon fell out itself 5 hours)

The morning of April 12th they connected me up to the drip to begin labor.

I informed the midwife's immediately that I would be wanting an epidural.

They increased the drip and the contractions came on very suddenly and they were so INTENSE.

I was begging for the epidural but they said they were so busy and were waiting to get through a few other patients first.

Over an hour went by, I was curled up, I couldn't open my eyes, I felt nauseous from the gas which wasn't helping the pain, crying, begging for an epidural.

Finally they came in for my epidural but I was contracting every 30 seconds. This made it extremely hard to sit up on the edge of the bed and be still. They attempted multiple times but it felt very rushed as my next contractions were coming on so quickly.

Finally the epidural was done and they pain relief was almost instant.

Eventually the midwife's checked how dilated I was and I was finally ready to push. Almost 12 hours later.

We tried pushing and we could see bubs head but she wouldn't come out.

We had a break and she said we will try again in an hour.

After pushing again bubs heart rate dropped twice. I was surround by doctors, anesthesiologists, midwife's.

They informed me that bub was in danger due to the heart rate dropping and the umbilical cord may be wrapped around her neck.

They rushed me into the Emergency operating theatre and prepped me for a Caesarian, my mum had to stay in the birthing suite, and my partner had to wait outside the operating room.

I was so incredibly scared and alone.

Finally they let my partner in who was pale as a ghost and also so scared.

My daughter ended up being delivered via forceps. I tore and had to be cut open to get her out. I lost 1L of blood and the operating theatre looked like a crime scene.

They took bubs away to clean her up, when they finally handed her to me to hold, I felt numb. I was so traumatized by what had happened I felt zero connection to this baby, I felt nothing.

Once I was stitched up they wheeled us back to the birthing suite where I was basically abandoned.

No one came in to help me feed my daughter or show me what to do, check her over, ask how I was feeling, did I want something to eat since I hadn't eaten since breakfast and it was now 8.30pm. Nothing.

My own mother had to help me latch my baby on to my breast as clearly no one was coming in to help.

Finally a midwife came in to check on us and asked if I had tried to feed.

I told her I felt really unwell, nausea & headache. They gave me some pain relief. I also asked her for some food as I was starving.

My partner & mum were asked to leave. I was petrified to be alone with this new baby while I felt so unwell and already felt like none in this hospital cared or wanted to help me.

I tried to get some sleep to see if that would help me feel better. A few hours passed and I tried to feed my baby again, it was not working, she wouldn't latch, she didn't want to wake up. I was crying and feeling so anxious. I buzzed for a nurse but no one came for so long.

I was texting my mum and partner so stressed out.

Finally at around 3am the nurse came in to transfer me to the maternity ward. I told her I hadn't fed my baby since his after birth & I was struggling & felt too sick.

Luckily I had some colostrum so she went and got that for me and fed the baby.

She also weighed my baby FINALLY this is the first time I had the weight.

I packed up my things and I had to wheel my own baby and belongings over to the maternity ward.

I could barely walk, I was weak, dizzy, nauseous.

I really felt like I needed a wheelchair and someone else to take my baby and belongings for me but I had to do this myself.

In the morning I finally had a midwife who seemed to care. She helped me breastfeed my baby, she gave me pain medication, she checked me over .

I was still feeling incredibly sick at this point and kept asking for stronger pain medication because my headache was unbearable and I felt like vomiting every 2 seconds.

They eventually gave me endone.

During my few days stay, I felt neglected again. Every time I would buzz for help it would take 30 minutes + for someone to come.

All I wanted was my partner or mum to be able to stay with me so they could help me. It was really hard to look after a newborn when you felt that unwell.

No one was taking me seriously when I said I felt sick and had an excruciating headache.

What if there was a serious life or death emergency?

One morning I was so sick, vomiting that I wet the bed.

Day 3 I went home from hospital, I was more than happy to leave as I just wanted to go home, where my partner could be there 24/7 and help me and that's when the intense migraines, vomiting, light headedness got to the next level. Bub didn't breastfeed for hours! The home visit midwife came out that day and almost called an ambulance I was so sick and bubs jaundice was getting worse as she wasn't feeding.

Back to hospital we both went, bub went under the UV lights for 24 hours.

They informed me I had complications from the epidural. I had a CSF leak and and hypertension headaches. This is cause by the epidural needle going in too far and puncturing the spine causing a hole that leaks fluid into the head.

A rare condition which they blamed on me for being overweight!!! Not negligence? Due to the fact that I had asked for an epidural from the start but they waited until I was having intense 30 second contractions? Because they couldn't get the needle in first go?

So to fix this we could either do a blood patch which also came with its own complications of having another spinal leak or try STRICT bedrest for 48 hours+ so we did this.

For 2 days I laid in the hospital bed flat. No going to the toilet, no sitting up, no breastfeeding. Everything was impossible.

The hospital after me begging let my partner stay the nights to help as he had a 24/7 job of looking after our baby. The nurses agreed they were way to busy and couldn't look after my baby 24/7 for me while I laid flat in a bed.

So my amazing partner took over, he did everything. Fed our baby every 3 hours, every nappy change, looking after me, putting a bed pan under me when I needed to poo & pee, changing my bloody pads, connecting me up to the breast pump, cleaning pump parts, changing my clothes, and getting food to me.

All while I just laid there watching.

It was honestly the most horrific and horrible experience and I cried non-stop and have never felt so helpless, worthless and useless. I almost gave up on breastfeeding/pumping and had asked for formula as it was all too hard.

The lack of connection I felt to my baby, the new mum experience was taken away from me.

But the 'strict bedrest' worked and I didn't need the blood patch or surgery. The bedrest gave the hole in my spine time enough to heal itself.

I was feeling much better and was able to go home.

I would never wish the pain and sickness I was feeling upon anyone. It was the worst I've ever felt in my entire 30 years of life.

My whole birth experience was traumatic, the aftermath was traumatic.

For months after I was still so sad and struggled with motherhood and I still don't believe I am over this whole experience. I fear the day I fall pregnant again and need to give birth. I want another baby, but is it really worth going through this again?

I am not sure.