

Submission
No 770

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

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Partially
Confidential

9/4/2021

I was 38 weeks pregnant with my first baby I was 20 at the time. I presented to Hospital with light headedness swollen ankles and feeling all round off and like I was on another planet. They tested me and I came back positive for Pre Eclampsia so I was admitted pretty much immediately which I didn't understand the severeness of the situation being my first baby and not having any research on pre e or anything to do with that type of stuff. My mum was 2 hours away and my partner was in for a work event. I was so out of it I didn't know what to do who to call I couldn't even drive up to the hospital as I was that dizzy and seeing stars. My mum ended up making it to the hospital and my partner shortly after but due to Covid restrictions there was only allowed 1 person at a time in the room with me. That was fine it was to be expected. hospital were amazing when I was admitted I got constantly monitored bloods taken blood pressure taken and Bub being on the CTG every 2-4 hours. Prior to this I was receiving care through the high risk clinic at hospital due to my 'BMI' and that was the only reason. No other explanation. Just my BMI. I was told 2 or 3 weeks prior to my admission that I was to be induced at hospital because no hospital close to could accomodate to my BMI. Which is bull.

I digress. The midwives were amazing during my stay at the hospital and I had to be monitored due to the Pre Eclampsia I was there for 2 days to see if it could be managed with blood pressure medication but nothing was assisting the decline so they contacted (I was scheduled to have an induction the week after) and told them what was going on (atleast I thought) and discharged me the afternoon of the 11/4/2021.

11/4/2021

38 weeks 2 days. My partner and I make the drive to hospital eager to get to meet our baby a little earlier than we expected. Still oblivious to the seriousness of pre eclampsia. We were told by hospital that we didn't need patient transfer and we could go home shower pack the bags take our time as long as we arrived there by late afternoon/early night. So we did just that I got myself showered and packed the car etc. We arrive at and find our way to the birth unit. We go in and are looked at like we are litteral aliens. There were midwives and doctors everywhere in a small square with what it seemed like 10 rooms just surrounding the nurses station. We spoke to one of the midwives there and she looked at us puzzled and said to my face 'why are you here??' Giiiiirrrlllllll... anyway we were taken to one of the spare rooms as she got a hold of the doctor in charge. My mother in law brought us some dinner as baby was monitored. The doctor arrived and started speaking to me about induction which I expected an early induction but I didn't expect what was going to happen. She got me prepared for getting the balloon catheter placed that night sleeping waking up and getting my waters broken. As she was halfway through explaining the process another doctor popped their head in the room and said 'no! She's not getting induced tonight!' The original doctor went out and came back in and said someone came in with a higher priority for induction and I had to stay the night in the on-site accomodation and get the induction started in the morning. The doctor then said she was going to check if I was dilated while my mother in law was in the room which I wasn't comfortable with. I gave her a look and she whispered and asked if I wanted my mother in law and partner to leave. I didn't want my

partner to leave but she took both of them out. I burst out crying when she came back in. I was tired, overwhelmed and just done after being told 1 thing and then straight away another and my partner. My safety being taken away when I needed him most. She offered me a tissue and explained what I needed to do the next day and left. That was it.

11/4/2021

We arrived at 6am to the ward and got admitted. A student midwife checked my dilation I was 1cm with thick cervix which was what I was the night before so not surprising. She then inserted the cervidil tape, did a CTG on baby and told me to do as much activity as possible to get baby down. Then left. We were left alone the whole day. Not once did baby get monitored. Blood pressure wasn't taken and it was extremely high at hospital and when I was checked the morning of the 11th. We were left alone to let it happen. No communication nothing. My mum came up for the day because I needed her I had no idea what to expect I had no idea what they were doing what the process was or anything.

12/4/2021

The cervidil was left in until the next morning when I was monitored on CTG finally. They took it out and checked my dilation again. Still no change. So we were told another one was to be inserted and see how we progress for the day. That was the whole conversation and again. We were left alone. No idea what to expect. My mum was still there at this time and I ended up doing constant laps around the hospital the whole day while my feet weren't even feet anymore they were just bowling balls from the swelling from the Pre E. Again not monitored for blood pressure. Baby wasn't monitored the whole day. Just left to my own devices and as a first time mum I had no idea what I was doing. By the end of the day I was finally starting to feel some pains and I was excited that things were finally progressing. I kept walking with my partner and mum doing inclines and squats whatever I could to get things going. I was excited for the first time in the whole process. Still no CTG nothing.

We came back to the room and as I sat down the pains started to get more intense. Again first time mum excited after being in hospital now for 3 days constantly being told different things I finally felt like I had some sort of control over the situation and I was ready for my body to take over. The pains were getting more intense and I called the midwife in. I was informed 'your not in labour. It takes days and days and days you haven't even started' without doing a cervical exam. Without a CTG just 'you're fine you're over reacting' pretty much. At this point my mum was furious and it was coming to the end of visiting hours. She went and gave them some heavily worded advice to help her daughter as I wasn't seen the whole day and the baby hadn't once been looked at. The nurse rolled her eyes at my mum and told her to leave and soon after my mum left sure enough she was in with the CTG. First one I had since the time I arrived at . My contractions were consistent enough to show up on the CTG and Bub was fine heart rate healthy and I was happy to let it progress over the night. The doctor came in and told me again that I wasn't in labour and this was only the start I've got dayyyyyss to go. They heavily recommended that I have a sleeping tablet and I refused as I wanted to progress by myself through the night. I think it was just a way to keep me quiet for the night after the encounter with my mum. They then asked my partner to leave because

visiting hours were over and came back in 20 minutes later. Again pressuring the sleeping tablet. I was alone vulnerable and had 3 people of 'authority' around me telling me that I needed to take a sleeping tablet because tomorrow was going to be long and I needed all of the sleep I could get. I reluctantly agreed and took the sleeping tablet.

13/4/2021

I slept until 5am and woke up and the tape fell out in the toilet. I waited until the doctors did their rounds and mentioned it to her when she came in. I had no more pains and I was so defeated again. Alone and vulnerable. I was on the phone to my partner and my mum as it was before visiting hours and I was just crying that I was done. I was so done and I was so upset that the pains had stopped which I am convinced and still convinced it was due to the sleeping tablet. The doctor came in and I hung up on my mum (partner was on his way up) she checked my dilation. Still no progress which just added to my sadness. I felt like I had failed my body and failed my baby. I was so done. She then insisted that we wait the rest of the day and the catheter balloon be inserted that night and I was guaranteed to be dilated enough to have my waters broken the next day and be put in the birthing unit.

I looked at her with tears in my eyes there were 2 other midwives there too and said 'what are my other options' I knew c section was my other option and that's what I wanted. She explained that I could opt for a c section but it was against their advice blah blah blah. I was just done. I pushed for it and was told 'well you're not an emergency so it probably won't even happen until tomorrow because you'll have to wait for the electives and any emergencies to come in and I'd be last priority pretty much. I was strong and knew what I wanted at that point because I was so done. I wasn't looked at once again the whole day. I was left alone to just wait. No updates nothing but I was happy with my decision as I just wanted my baby here I was so done with being in a hospital that I felt like a number in. The anaesthesiologist came in and was asking me my medical history etc. an hour later I was being wheeled into surgery. As I was about to go in I was told 'you're actually an emergency because of how severe your pre e is' okay no worries that's the first I've heard of that.

The c section went well and within minutes we were greeted with our baby girl. It was the best feeling in the world I felt on cloud nine. But the moment I seen her was the moment they took her away. She was perfect there were no issues. I didn't get any skin to skin they just took my baby away. My partner was then taken with baby to the room and I was taken to post op. The second I got back to post op I vomited 6 times and my blood pressure was 190/100. Borderline heart attack I heard them saying that there was a bed in ICU ready and the cardiac team were on standby. 3 hours I was there until my blood pressure had gone down. 3 hours. No phone. No communication with how my baby was. No information on her weight height. Nothing. My partner not being told where I was what was happening if I was okay. Just handed this newborn baby and left alone. Again.

We were both alone but in different places. As I came to a bit more and the vomiting calmed down they had given me the strongest anti nausea and blood pressure medication and it started to calm down. I asked every time the cuff went up and down whether I could go. What was happening with my baby. Each time I was told 'I don't know. She was taken with dad.'

Thanks. Great thing to tell a mum that's seen their baby for a whole of 2 minutes. Eventually the head OB came over and discharged me from post op and I was so relieved and excited to finally see my baby. The nurse quickly made sure she told the OB 'oh she's keen to see Bub' with a half grin and roll of the eyes. I finally got to be with my baby at 7:30pm she was born at 4pm. I finally got to see my partner and my baby and it was the best most calm experience that I got to be with them again. 7:45pm the midwife came in and told my partner he had to leave as visiting hours stopped at 8pm. 15 minutes is all I got to spend with my partner and my baby. 15 minutes after almost dying. He had to leave and I was left.

The whole night. Alone. Scared and had no idea what to do. She was asleep pretty much for the first 24 hours and only woke up a handful of times in the night but I was awake the whole night because I was so happy and excited to have my little baby. We were not once checked on during the night not until I pressed the buzzer at 12am and asked to have a shower and they came in and said I could. She changed my sheets and left. I bottle fed Bub the whole night as I had no idea how to breastfeed as much as I wanted to I had no support.

14/4/2021

Partner arrived in the morning and we again weren't checked the whole day. I called a midwife in a handful of times to help with the latch but because Bub was sleepy from the sleeping tablet and the c section medications she wasn't latching and would just go to sleep on the boob. I called the midwife in again to help with latch and she rolled her eyes and sighed whenever she had to get close to me. Again I felt alienated. My partner raised concern that bubs nose was covered when I was feeding. So I brought this concern up to the midwife when she was ready for her next feed. I was told straight to my face dead on 'yeah well we get a few infant deaths a year from suffocation of breastfeeding especially with someone of your size and bigger breasts'.

Being a first time mum I took that on board completely and yep that was enough for me to go nope no breastfeeding what so ever. By the end of the day I was done. My sheets were filthy with blood as I had leaked. I asked where the spare sheets were and they said they'd be back in with some soon. Soon never came hours and hours later sitting in disgusting sheets. I was done. My partner was done. We just wanted to be home. I ended up asking to be discharged. They wanted us to stay an extra 2 days and I just couldn't. It wasn't in my best interest or my babies. I was getting no support my whole family was in 3 hours away I had no support I had no one but my partner. I had better care at home instead of there. Within 5 minutes of me asking for a discharge there was a doctor in signing my papers and sending me off. That was the first time since having the baby I had seen a doctor. We got to go home and the minute we got home it was the best feeling in the world.

My girl is 2 and 3 months now and she is thriving. I have since had another baby who is 7 months who I had to give birth to in again due to 'BMI'. I opted for a c section as I didn't want to go through the induction process again and I would've had to be induced due to how far away is from . Her birth was incredible and swift and easy which I'm so grateful for. But that does not disregard the absolute neglect and trauma I had from my first birth at .