

Submission
No 785

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I am a 28 year old woman with 2 children.

I gave birth to my first on 22/5/20 at _____ Hospital (Public) in Sydney under the MGP team.

I am an RN by trade but making this submission from the standpoint of a birthing woman.

I am a low risk woman in pregnancy and had no complications, GBS, GDM, low BMI etc for both pregnancies.

At 41+5 weeks I was induced.

I had wanted a normal physiological birth and with some sound knowledge of the cascade of intervention wanted to avoid it.

I was coerced in to induction using PROM and fear of cord prolapse as the main driver.

The obstetrician questioned the midwife's judgement in front of me when feeling for my daughters position "you think that babies head is engaged? It's way too high to send her home." She was dismissive and condescending to the midwife. The tone was unprofessional and left me as the patient questioning whose judgement to believe. With this information I was told although a small risk, cord prolapse outside of hospital will essentially mean a dead baby, therefore I must stay and be induced.

I then felt anxious and further from accepting induction as I could sense the coercion. I was questioned about this anxiety and made to feel like the induction wasn't a big deal and would at least mean a healthy baby.

Midwives changed shifts throughout my labour and I birthed with a casual midwife.

With the understanding my baby might be sitting high in my pelvis I declined an epidural to give myself the best chance at a vaginal delivery. I had no analgesia (by choice) and with that was exhausted by the final stages of labour. To my knowledge, my baby had become distressed and required assistance to birth, I received an episiotomy and vacuum.

I had told my MGP midwife I was happy with an assisted third stage however when the time came the casual midwife injected into my leg without even speaking to me, no pre-warning that the needle was coming. I yelled in surprise and she apologised.

My daughter was healthy and allowed to have skin to skin with me immediately until I was ready for her to be measured.

I stayed in hospital with my husband and daughter for another 2 days, I didn't see another MO for the rest of my visit, no debrief post or explanation for the use of intervention. We

were told we could wait to see the team but had no idea when that would be. With that information we discharged home.

I suffered with an anal fissure for many months postpartum which caused extensive pain and impacted my daily functioning. I still suffer discomfort with my episiotomy scar.

I also went through PND and have been medicated since.

By comparison to some stories of birth trauma I have heard, I feel mine does not appear as remarkable. However from the outset the lack of control, the prolonged and very painful labour and the absence of any post birth consultation with the obstetric team, I believe, contributed to my PND and much anxiety entering my second birth.

I felt I would rather free birth than experience something like that again.

I felt traumatised by my experience.

Evidently, illustrating my experience and the impact on my life is limited in this short submission however my comparative second birth experience (which was a normal physiological birth with comfortable/quick recovery) really highlighted to me how traumatised I was by my first birth and my lack of control in it.

I laboured at home at 39weeks pregnant with my second and arrived at the hospital with my son born, unassisted 20 minutes later - again with the MGP team, this time at Hospital. This birth experience was extremely healing for me as I felt heard and cared for, not pushed in to a medically controlled birth.

My first baby was a very unsettled newborn and my second a very calm baby - I cannot help but feel that their entry in to the world and it's impact on me set the tone for the beginning of their lives.

I believe the issues faced by birthing people largely result from systematic failures - understaffed and overworked, tight guidelines, policy driven by fear of litigation.

I would like to see compulsory debrief by the medical team with parents after birth, if not in person at least via Telehealth.

Healthy, low risk women should not be coerced into induction purely for being over their "due date." A magical number that is a guesstimate in many cases.

Across the board a culture shift is required in healthcare but this can't happen with a system that continues to morally injure their staff with unrealistic expectations.

We need to do much better than just getting the babies earth-side alive.