

Submission
No 786

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Ms Maria Strandberg

Date Received: 8 August 2023

Partially
Confidential

Hello,

I gave birth to my first child on the first of April 2018 at the _____ in _____. It was a long labour of 46 hours which resulted in an emergency c-section.

Although I came home with a healthy baby in the end both me and my partner and probably my baby had a lot of emotional distress after the birth. I was diagnosed with PTSD 3 months after the birth and I was seen by a specialist for my poor mental health. I struggled to bond with my baby after the traumatic birth.

My birth was not dramatic but it ended up traumatic for me and my partner.

My waters broke at 4am on the 30th of March. I laboured at home for most of the day until we went to the hospital in the evening. I was seen by a midwife who checked how far dilated I was (2cm) and confirmed that my waters had ruptured. I was sent home with some codeine but no words of encouragement or advice on how to continue. And I was told to come back in the morning if nothing happened over night. We were back next morning and since I was still only 2 cm, my labour was augmented without getting proper medical recommendations on how that would feel, the impact of the baby, the risk of further interventions and no other real suggestion.

I never really felt seen or consulted during my labour at the labour ward. The midwife in charge mostly sat in front of the monitor and my partner and I felt really alone. After 8 hours of augmented contractions I hadn't progressed that much and I was tired. I asked for the epidural. They suggested morphine which I accepted. The morphine didn't do much and I asked for the epidural again. After 14 hours I received the epidural. Once again there wasn't much of a discussion and consulting me on the risks. And never during my labour was there any talk about spinning babies or other natural ways of helping baby come down the pelvis (the reason my labour was so long was because baby was still too high up in my pelvis but the midwife or the OBs never ever suggested different body positions or stretches to naturally help baby into a better position).

The epidural was strong so I couldn't move my legs after it was in but I couldn't feel any pain afterwards. After a number of internal exams and medical interventions, I had a fever and high blood pressure and my baby was also showing distress. It was recommended that I should have a c-section, the discussion about the c-section didn't feel like a discussion but more like this is what you should do or you will have a dead baby. We waited for over an hour for the c-section because once the syntocin was turned off my baby's heart rate stabilised and it was never really an emergency.

During the c-section I was never really treated like a person in a difficult position. I was told that my baby might die but then the staff didn't properly inform me what was going on and my partner was not allowed into the theatre until after 15 minutes and the whole procedure didn't feel like the joyful event that I had imagined that my first baby's birth would be like. Immediately after the birth I was separated from my baby because of checking her over despite her showing no signs of distress. I didn't have any skin to skin until the next day. In

the post-op room I was once again separated from my baby because the had to check me over. During the week my partner and I stayed at the after the birth, I didn't receive any extra support despite the fact that I flagged with the staff that I had a history of depression and we had had a difficult and long birth. That first week with our newborn was hell. I was in pain and exhausted, my partner was exhausted, the baby was exhausted and didn't feed well which meant she lost too much weight. I struggled to breastfeed and had nightmares from the birth and especially the c-section.

It has taken me years of therapy to think of my first birth without crying. I didn't feel seen, supported or soothed by the staff at My birth was treated as a medical condition and not the huge life changing event that it is.

My first birth didn't need to be traumatic even if it ended up in a c-section.

My second birth was an unmedicated VBAC. There was nothing wrong with my body or my baby just the system in which I was giving birth.

This system is not working.