

Submission  
No 793

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

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Partially  
Confidential

I gave birth in 2021.

I was unsuccessful in achieving the gold standard of care in the midwife program. I was absolutely devastated that as a first time mum I was not going to have the continuity of care that is proven to provide better outcomes for mothers and babies. The research says that it is more affordable and provides much much better outcomes for women and babies and for some reason that recommendation has not been implemented.

I cried for several days not knowing what to do- I knew I wasn't going to have the support I needed and I didn't trust that the care recieved at the hospital would make me feel safe and make me feel like I had all of the evidence based information.

My husband and I researched birth support and found that Doula's are a great way to recieve birth support and that they would provide all of the evidence not just the evidence that suits the hospital and their policies. My doula saved my birthing experience she instilled in me so much knowledge and the fight within me to question my care providers and not feel scared to do so (even though I was still very scared). I felt like every time I stepped in the hospital I was going into war and I was. I was going into adovate for myself against people who seemingly knew more then me. This was their job but i would slowly realise that they were conditioned to the ways of the hospital that did not support better outcomes for women rather it supported the idea of the system. That women needed to be moved in and out of the hospital quickly.

During covid- hospital did not budge on the ruling of 1 support person in the delivery room. I made submissions and special requests, I had emotional conversations with Midwife NUM (nursing unit manager) I had conversations with social workers in the hospital and not one person sympathesised with my need to have my doula who was my continuity throughout my whole pregnancy. I provided the reserarch which stated the importance of the continuity and how not having her exposed me to higher risk of having postnatal depression among other issues including breast feeding issues. No one cared and I think I only received 1 response.

After weeks of lobbying and trying to make this happen at 36 weeks I had decided that I didn't want to risk have post natal depression and other complications so I opted to have a home birth. Unfortunately for me there was no private practicing midwives available because women had been facing the hospital policies as I had which caused the midwives to have their books full. At 36 weeks pregnant I was stressing, I didn't want to birth in the hosptial without my support people due to actual evidence based reasons, I started thinking about just staying home and birthing on my own with my doula and husband. My husband was petrified by this idea and this cause a lot of angst and pressure towards the end of my pregnancy when we were supposed to be enjoying our time together.

At my 36 week appointment with a midwife she instructed me that she needed to book in an induction. I asked her why as I had no risk factors and was completely healthy, I had expressed I wanted an unmedicated and interference free birth and she told me that it was hospital policy to do so at 40 weeks. I told her that I wouldn't go ahead with it. The Midwife asked me

to go back to waiting room where I waited another hour on top of the hour I had waited for my midwife (this is normal- group of 20 heavily pregnant women sitting in uncomfortable chairs in waiting rooms waiting for overworked doctors and midwives for 1 hour minimum) A doctor then came to collect me to "educate" me on why it was important to have an induction at 40 weeks.

This particular doctor told me that I was putting my baby at risk as I doubled my chances of a still birth every week I went over 40 weeks. Luckily I had been briefed on how this conversation would go and I had been provided the correct research by my doula. I requested the doctor find me the % of risk as I knew the increase she was talking about was an increase from 0.01 to 0.02% risk (virtually non-existent). The doctor had no idea of the numbers but was happy to use the word double in order to coerce me into doing what she wanted me to do. I fear for some women who did not have the information that I did that they would go ahead with this information because we should be able to trust our care providers. I fear that they would then have their induction and then fall victim to more hospital policy and the cascade of intervention that the hospital provides leading to unwanted outcomes, loss of control and birth trauma.

I ended up birthing at 40 weeks and 2 days. I had a beautiful unmedicated natural birth that was over within 6 hours. Many friends of mine were not so lucky. Many friends are put on the hospital's clock. The clock that says that women need to progress 1cm every hour otherwise the hospital should intervene. The research that this is based on does not reflect first-time mothers and gives them unrealistic and harsh deadlines. Women have been told "If you don't dilate 6cm in the next hour, we are prepping you for a c-section" no consultation, no education or empathy.

I'm currently pregnant with my second child and I have opted to have a home birth with a private midwife. The midwife attends my home for appointments, talks me through all of the information, provides me with evidence-based research, advocates for me and makes me feel like I'm in great hands. I'm so thankful that I am able to have this care. My husband and I are saving up this year to be able to afford this birth at home which will leave us close to \$6000 out of pocket. We deem it worth it if it means we will not have a similar experience to birthing in the hospital like last time.

We already know what the gold standard of care is. Midwifery group practice for all women. Leave the doctors for the emergencies and leave the natural, normal physiological child birth to the woman and the midwives who need to be retrained in normal child birth not hospital child birth.

We need more funding for Private midwives and more rebates for women to access this information. In the area I am in you need to engage with a private midwife the second you find out you are pregnant as they book out so quickly. It is a model of care women are choosing and it needs to be recommended and better funded for healthy women and normal births!

Please help us.