

Submission
No 797

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

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Partially
Confidential

First Birth

My first pregnancy my baby was diagnosed with a congenital condition at 32 weeks. Because of this the rest of my pregnancy was focused on my babies condition and what his post birth treatment would look like.

I was worried for my baby and if he would be ok. Unfortunately no one was worried about me - making sure I was ok, or that I was prepared for birth and labour.

During labour I was coerced to lie on my back. I asked for other options by my midwife would not help. She was exhausted from working a double shift and clearly just wanted to go home. I gave birth at the _____ hospital and part of my care plan was that one of three midwives would be at the birth. The other two were unavailable so she had to stay.

I was given an IV without asking consent. They couldn't get a vein in my wrist so they put it in my elbow - this was incredibly painful and made moving positions in labour very difficult. I was forced to wear a CTG monitor and doctors and nurses were constantly rushing in and fiddling with it to get an accurate heart beat with no regard for my privacy or keeping a calm environment.

After pushing for over an hour I was threatened with a vacuum extraction - I refused as I did not want to be cut. My baby was born not long after this. He was placed on my chest for a few minutes, then the midwife asked if they could do his checks. They never gave him back to me after this - he was moved straight to the special care nursery without any consultation with me. Prior to this I had be told I could have a couple of hours skin to skin if I wished.

I wasn't well after labour and so had to return to my room which was on a different floor in the labour ward. I didn't get to see or hold my baby until the next day. When I went to the NICU to see my baby - I asked a nurse if I could hold him - and she told me I had to wait an hour until 'carers'. I didn't know what carers was so I just sat in my wheelchair and waited.

Second Birth

I didn't realise how traumatic my first birth was until I was pregnant with my second baby. I started having panic attacks and getting anxiety about labour. I wanted a private midwife and to labour at home - however we couldn't afford one.

I found a doula who we could afford and she worked with me over numerous weeks to settle my fears. At 20 weeks after my morphology scan I received a call from the hospital that something was not right with my scan and I needed to get another one in a week or so. I immediately went to the hospital to speak with the doctor as I was so triggered from my past experiences. The doctor refused to tell me what was wrong with the scan and if anything was wrong with the baby. She eventually told me the babies head was too small - but wouldn't divulge what that meant medically for the baby. I was very upset and scared and booked the extra scan at the specialist ultrasound clinic in _____. After the scan I was told

everything was fine and there was nothing to worry about. Next the hospital wanted me to meet with the obstetrician as I had complications with my first birth. The obstetrician was hyper fixated on the size of my first born and if he was considered small. This was never discussed at my first labour or pregnancy and I said I didn't know. But he was born at 2.45kg. After that meeting I told my midwife I didn't want any further interventions unless absolutely necessary - I refused extra scans and OB appointments as they only gave me anxiety and stress.

At 39 weeks my belly was measuring just below the average. My midwife recommended we get a scan just to check baby was growing ok. I agreed.

The scan suggested baby was small but ok.

The OB saw the scan and insisted that baby was IUGR and needed to be induced immediately.

I refused.

He told me I was being irresponsible and that my baby could die. I ask him what else we could do.

He said nothing - This baby needs to be born and if you refuse there is nothing more I can do. I suggested a scan to check my placenta or further CTG monitoring. He said if I wanted to do those things I could but he could no longer help me.

He told me while I was alone with no support that he was too busy to treat me as an individual and he would stick to the hospitals policies.

At 40 weeks we started regular CTG monitoring - one trace came back as abnormal. The same OB bundled me in the room - while I still had my clothes off and told me that It was too late for an induction, my baby was too small and could die at any time. And was too small and weak for induction medication. The only option now was to have an emergency caesarian. I was distraught as this was the last thing I wanted. Again I was alone without my partner. I asked the hospital if I could go home (5 mins drive) get some clothes and talk to my partner. They said no.

I called my husband who immediately made arrangements for our toddler - It was during the august lockdown and children were not permitted in hospitals. He came up to talk to me. During that time my student midwife and my leading midwife came to see how I was. The hospital midwives advised me that my baby looked fine on the trace and there was no medical reason to have an emergency cesarian. The OB came back in and disagreed and insisted I needed on immediately.

I refused.

I came up with a plan with the midwives to have my waters broken the next day, and if labour did not progress I would agree to a cesarian. Thankfully after having my waters broken I went into labour and required no further intervention. The OB required continuous foetal monitoring, however after 20 minutes of a clear trace the midwife removed it so I could move freely and be more comfortable. My midwives filled up the bath so I could labour in the water and move around. As It got closer to the end the midwives strategically left the room so that It would be too late to remove me from the water so I could have the water birth I wanted (which the hospital wanted to deny me)

My baby was born a very healthy 3.2kg and definitely was not IUGR. She had lots of vernix which suggested my due dates were off. She did not look over 40 weeks. Leaving the hospital 5 hours later with my baby we walked past the OB who looked at us and said nothing.

This was a horrific experience that was not founded in evidence. Had I not been educated in evidence based practice and had the support of my doula and a wonderful student midwife I would have be coerced into an emergency cesarian, my second and last birth experience would have been taken away from me.