

Submission  
No 816

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

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Partially  
Confidential

I hated my first birth experience. I birthed at Private hospital (a hospital with one of the highest rates of intervention in the state). I felt trapped in a bed, disempower and made to feel weak when going through contractions. The only pain management option I was given was a bath before pethidine then an epidural rather than encouragement. I went with an epidural already feeling like a failure and told to rest/sleep. After another check suddenly I was told to start pushing - something that wouldn't have been such a shock if I was encouraged to be in powder of my own experience. My birth resulted in me delivering in one of the most inefficient positions (my back - multiple studies suggest it's the worst and originally only for male viewing). I then needed ventouse, had a second degree tear and a haematoma. As a result, I missed out on significant skin-to-skin time and breastfeed. The haematoma was initially treated but once the epidural wore off I was in excruciating pain after being moved to the ward No was made to have another internal examination before the obstetrician even decided to come back into the hospital even though I needed gas for the pain. I was given another spinal block and was awake for the duration of my packing feeling my body move on the bed but feeling completely alone. It wasn't until midnight I was back in the ward and so depleted. I needed an iron infusion and when my packing and sutures were taken out my obstetrician said "I just tell my patients to cough" then ripped them out without giving me a chance to respond to what he had said. My whole experience left me feeling distressed and I believe was the cause of my postnatal depression. It took me years before I could think about going through another birthing experience.

For my second, I invested in a birthing doula and this is exactly what all women need and deserve in their pregnancy and birth. I was made to feel empowered to deliver my baby naturally and with all my medical decisions being consensual. With her assistance, I delivered without any intervention and with only a second degree tear (due to scar tissue). I was able to leave Private after two days (even though they wanted me to stay for more even though there was no medical reason to do so - probably just for money). Since then my journey postpartum has been incredible and I've never been so proud of myself and what I can accomplish.

Continuity of care is so important. Despite my obstetricians being somewhat unhelpful and disempowering I'm lucky to have a team of medical professionals beyond the hospital that guided me. My doula (former midwife) was by far the most valuable, my psychiatrist and psychologist were and remain critical in maintaining my wellbeing, and my pelvic floor physio helps me gain physical strength again. Further postpartum support from a doula is the only thing I feel is missing but ALL of these professionals are what each and every person birthing needs.

This includes partners because my husband experienced postnatal depression and so desperately needed assistance but if it's not offered he won't seek it - if it's part of the process then the likelihood of relationship breakdowns and disconnection with baby would be far less. Equitable expectations regarding parental leave is also needed so it's not solely one person's responsibility to care for the baby. The experience should be about building families, not focusing on money.