

Submission
No 824

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

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Partially
Confidential

I am a mother of 4.

May 2008 - My first born son was an epidural after many hours of labour. As it was my first, I had no idea what to expect. It was a very normal delivery considering and he was healthy and happy.

December 2009 - My first born daughter was (picked up at our 19 week scan) diagnosed with a left hand diaphragmatic herina. An amniocentesis was ordered and a suggestion of termination at 24 weeks. The amniocentesis results were normal suggesting it was just a random defect, so we declined the termination. hospital advised they were capable of correcting her diaphragmatic hernia, and would not need to be transferred to Sydney. On the birthing day (booked in to be induced) the neonatal specialist was in a meeting, leaving the midwives who had no information of my daughters condition in charge of delivering her. At 5:30pm I told the midwife I my body needs to push.

She checked my cervix and advised me I was at a 7. I asked her when the specialist would be there as my daughter would need to be intubated, shocked she said she was still in the meeting. My partner suggested they get her there asap. 10 minutes later the urge to push was so intense, so I asked her to check again. She did after muttering that there was no way I was 10. Sure enough, I was a 10. She then puts her hand on my daughters head, telling me not to push, but to breathe through it. The urge to push was so intense and the contractions were very painful as I was on the synthetic labour drip.

Minutes passed, which felt like forever and the specialist appeared and advised me I was now allowed to push. So I did. My daughter was halfway out just above the hips and my contractions stopped. The next thing I knew, the alarms were going off and about 10 people were in the room. An elderly lady with white hair grabbed one of my legs, and another on the other side and pulled them up to my chest. "Push" She said. "My contractions are gone." I said. "Bare down and push like you're pushing with one" so I did. While I was pushing, they were intubating her. At 5:58pm, she was here.

Once she was out, they took her over and got her stabilised and wisked her off to nicu, without any explanation of what was happening. At this point, the obstetrician doctor who was on shift noticed that my placenta had not come away. She told me to hold my friends hand. So I did. She put her hand up inside my uterus and massage from the inside and on top simultaneously. It hurt worse than childbirth, and nearly had me in tears. Once she stitched me up, the midwives advised me that they would come back and assist my shower.

An hour passed. I was still on the bed. Crying because I was covered in blood still and not one person had come to tell me if my daughter was ok. My partner ended up asking if the nurse could come give us a hand to clean up. About 2 hours after she was born, the specialist advised me that she was stable, but couldn't give me a time or date as when surgery could be preformed.

So, they set me on the post natal ward. With all the babies crying, it was hard to sleep.

At 1030pm that night, the specialist came to my room. "I'm so sorry Amber, but will have to be transferred to . Unfortunately we didn't pick up that she has pulmonary hypertension as well as her diaphragmatic herina. In babies with normal lung development,

the hypertension usually isn't an issue. However, this time, it is as she has lung tissue, but they aren't fully formed."

"Can I go with her?" I asked.

"Unfortunately, no and you'll need to be released into the care of a medical professional to get there." She responded.

"My mother is a nurse, can she sign me out? When do you plan on taking her?" I asked through tears, becoming frantic.

"Yes, that will be fine but we will be flying her tonight. Careflight will be here in 20 minutes."

By this point, I felt sick. Everything was a whirlwind. I didn't know if I'd see her in Sydney. Scared to be so far away from everything. The boys especially.

Mum picked me up at 9 the next day. It was a rough sleep on the post natal ward. My breasts were aching even with hand expressing to relieve them.

When we arrived in Sydney, the ICU ward nurse wasn't very polite but she had informed me that the intubation tube was kinked on her flight. I requested that they do an MRI to check to see if there was any damage to her brain. To our relief the scan was clear.

I was put in the hospital, in the pre-natal ward for the first week. Then organised the hostel for what would be the remaining 5. They gave me a breast pump and advised me I should pump when I need to for when she is ready for milk.

2 weeks in an induced coma to stop her from pulling her tubes out on the high flow ventilator, they tried to move her for surgery but couldn't get her stable on the conventional ventilator. So they closed the ICU ward down and the amazing doctor did it there. Fast forward to 4 weeks, we got to hold her for the first time and by 6 weeks we were back to NICU for another 3 weeks.

Not once during that experience or years after was there any kind of debriefing or suggestion of counselling for either my partner or myself. For about 2 years after her birth, I had many PTSD symptoms but didn't know as I was uneducated at the time.

June 2015- We welcomed our third child, second daughter into the world. It was a beautiful, normal birth. However, about 2 hours after, I was sitting in my room. I got up to go to the toilet and when I stood up, the bed and bluey was covered in blood. I had bled through my pad and my clothes. No big deal, I thought, I'll just change. So I did. Changed the sheets too. About 10 minutes later the same thing happened. So I repeated what I did before.

Then the 3rd time, I had changed into my last set of clothes.

As none of the nurses had come to check on us, I wandered out to the nurses station and said 'I think I might be haemorrhaging.'

The nurse looked at me and said 'Now, what makes you think that?'

'This isn't my first rodeo. I know I'm not meant to change my clothes, sheets and pad every 10 minutes. So would you kindly help me out, just wondering how normal that might be on the third child?' I said.

She came to my room and saw what I was saying and told me to lay down that my cervix wasn't closing like it should and that they would give me something to help it close. I had to organise my clothes for the rest of the stay.

May 2018- our fourth child, youngest daughter was born with no complications, but for the first 12-16 hours she just slept. I asked the nurse if maybe she might have jaundice. 'Some babies are just tired after their delivery' she responded.

The next day the doctor came to do his rounds and I expressed my concerns. So he checked her over and confirmed that she was in fact, jaundice. Gave her a sun bed and stayed an extra night. She began to perk up and was all fine in the end.