

Submission
No 825

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

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Partially
Confidential

Hello,

My name is Emily and I gave birth to my daughter in April 2022 in Public Hospital.

I went in with a plan, and nothing went to plan. Though I had written out step by step the pain management levels I wanted to go through, they kept suggesting different things which I was in no state to comment on and my poor husband just went with what the midwives said. We did not have any classes provided prior to birth about what to expect or why we should choose one option over another.

I have mild arthritis in both knees. The midwife was unknown to me and did not read my file correctly. I was allowed (I was on morphine and gas at this point and had no concept of time) to kneel on the bed for over an hour. Later in the birth, the midwives swapped, and they tried to make me kneel again. They kept pushing me to get up and kneel even though I told them I couldn't. At that point the morphine was wearing off and the pain in my knees was almost as bad as the pain from the contractions.

I was given the synthetic oxytocin after my water broke and labour didn't progress. I got to the hospital at 10am with mild contractions. As I had tested positive for Strep B they made the decision to induce. I was not cleared for the antibiotics to go with the synth. oxytocin until 4pm. I gave birth to my daughter at 4:59am the next day, after 2 hours of pushing.

My daughter's head was not correctly positioned in the birth canal. It was turned pointing to my leg and forehead first rather than crown first. This was not discovered until she was close enough for the midwife to see, however after she got stuck trying to exit they brought in the ultrasound and realised her poor positioning.

I was whipped into theatre where they tried a ventouse first but failed. Then tried forceps. On the last try with the forceps before moving to a C-section, my daughter came out. I suffered a 3B tear in the process. This is where the perineum tears from vagina to the anus, tearing more than 50% of the way through the outer anal sphincter. I struggled to sit for almost 6 weeks after birth. My daughter suffered a Cephalohematoma. I was informed afterwards, that had I needed a c-section it would have been an old school one up the abdomen. Due to needing to be stitched up and my daughter needing to go to special care, we were separated for 5 hours.

Very little was discussed before birth at what could happen. Obviously I was made aware that sometimes forceps, vacuum and c-sections were needed but the full scope of what that meant was never discussed. I did not know that I could tear down to my anus that had the possibility to leave me incontinent both for pee and poo.

Could all this have been avoided? Yes. Do I blame the midwives and obstetricians? Not completely, I do believe they did the best and making decisions as soon as they got more information, however, I do feel somethings may have been avoided (like kneeling for too long) had my file been read properly.

When I was born my mother had forceps used and she was not stitched back up correctly. My great grandmother suffered a uterus infection that lead to septicaemia, she died 4 days after my grandmother's birth. Birth trauma is a generational trauma that has become so prevalent that it has become accepted and taboo to be discussed.

I am happy for this written submission to be used. But I do not wish to make a verbal statement.