

Submission  
No 949

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
Confidential

A mother's instinct.

In December 2019 I gave birth to my first daughter at [REDACTED] Hospital and it left me utterly traumatised for years.

I had a very simple pregnancy till 35 weeks, after which I was hospitalised a few times in the following month experiencing runs of inappropriate sinus tachycardia. I was seen at [REDACTED] Hospital [REDACTED] during these admissions and admitted as an inpatient, and commenced on Labetalol to maintain sinus rhythm during the episodes of tachycardia. I was told that I could be taken off it immediately after the birth and that they expected my pregnancy was the cause and that it would settle as soon as I birthed my daughter. Due to the unpredictability yet frequency of these episodes of tachycardia, it was recommended that I be induced.

I attended [REDACTED] maternity ward with my husband at 38w 3d in the evening, and because I was already 3cm dilated the midwife said they would commence the next morning at 8am with Pitocin for the induction and break my waters. I was not asked about anything to do with my opinion of this plan. When I had my Pitocin started, and waters broken the next day, December 12 2019, contractions began immediately and were consistently progressing well. Within the first 2 hours of my labour I had the obstetrician that was attending for that day come in and tell me that the plan for the management of my heart was to "have an early epidural and a prolonged second stage to reduce the time you are pushing, take the pressure off your heart". I questioned when I would have to stop taking the labetalol, and was told I wouldn't need it after today.

I was given an epidural, which failed, with the only numbness I experienced being complete loss of sensation in one leg, and being completely numb from my belly button down. I breathed through every contraction and was fully dilated within 4 hours. They then told me that they would let baby "passively descend" and start pushing at 4pm. My baby girl was born healthy at 4:52pm. The attending obstetrician then came in and asked the midwife how the birth went, asked if the placenta was born intact, to which the midwife said "yes". Upon examination I had the obstetrician enter her full forearm into my body and remove small pieces of placenta with her fingers, holding it up on her finger, across the room asking the midwife "then what's this?". I experienced 4 grade 3 tears which were sutured.

All the expected checks on baby were performed with no troubles. We had a private room, and were constantly encouraged to "go home before day 3 so you can get the home-care nurse to come visit". I rarely had a midwife as the staff member that checked on baby and I, it was usually a nurse.

Within 48 hours of the birth I began feeling lightheaded and extremely nauseous and showing the odd reading of high blood pressure. I told every staff member that entered the room throughout the day that I wasn't feeling well. It was all shrugged off as "you just gave birth, are you drinking enough water, its just the fatigue".

The midwives that took vitals all looked at the blood pressure machines as if they were lying, getting different machines, checking to see which ones said what. I had the obstetrician that was present on the day come into the room with absolutely no eye contact, sit and put her hands between her legs looking at the ground, explaining my blood pressure readings were high and that we would “do more tests” before leaving the room. I then had two staff come in and explain they would put in an “in-out-catheter” to check for protein in my urine. In this procedure, they laid me naked on a bed, poured straight chlorhexidine all over my front and groin and rubbed with gauze all over my fresh vaginal wounds before inserting a 30cm tube into my urethra to draw out a urine sample that wouldn’t be tainted with my postpartum blood loss, whilst I was 100% awake. I also had blood drawn to observe any abnormalities present.

When the blood and urine tests came back fine, they pushed for discharge. I asked for one more day so I could become more confident breastfeeding with the help of the lactation consultant, and because I still wasn’t feeling right. They agreed. I was discharged on day 3, December 15th. I had a home care midwife visit on day 4, I explained I was extremely nauseous, had no appetite and felt just horrible. Despite my cardiac history before the birth, she had nothing to do with me at that visit. She just checked baby. What about the mother?

By the 17<sup>th</sup> of December I felt horribly ill. On discharge from the maternity unit you are provided a sheet of paper that says if you have any symptoms of headache, nausea, etc etc to call the midwifery unit. So I did, to which they encouraged me to attend the unit for a check. I attended and was seen by the obstetrician who was present after my birth, with a blood pressure reading of 170/90, I was told I could have a stroke at any moment, and was given medication to reduce my blood pressure. The cardiologist attending thought I may be having a beta-blocker withdrawal, so put me back on labetalol to be weaned. I had an intern doctor come in with a team of other doctors who said I was extremely emotional, they looked at the swelling in my right foot and that was never mentioned again. When my blood pressure became stable, they discharged me by December 18 with medication. I still didn’t feel any improvement and my right foot was still swollen. They said my nausea could be because of the hormones with breastfeeding.

By December 19, I was so nauseous and so exhausted from laying in bed with my heart thumping so hard it was shaking my whole body that we again, called the midwifery unit and was told to reattend the birthing suite for an exam. They reported my blood pressure was again too high, 160/100, and that I could have a stroke or a seizure at any point. But this time I had a midwife see me, who shut us away from everyone else and said not to listen to the obstetric staff, but to go immediately down to emergency to be seen, so that someone actually does something, as I was presenting with a well known but rare post-partum complication called Postpartum Preeclampsia. I was seen promptly in emergency, and immediately admitted. I had a man from obstetrics that I had never seen come and look at my baby in the emergency department, tell me it wasn’t an obstetric problem and leave. I was admitted to the critical care unit (CCU) for 4 days, before finally being discharged for the last time on December 23<sup>rd</sup>.

While I should have been at home, for the first week of my life as a mother, loving on our beautiful miracle conception baby, I was in and out of hospital, being poked, prodded, and disregarded by staff who consistently brushed off my medical concerns to the point where I was discharged and re-admitted 3 times in a week. I should never have been discharged the first time with high blood pressure as a mother who had recently given birth, and at the very least, should have had my blood pressure checked by the home care nurse the next day. I thank the heavens every day that I trusted myself and repeatedly returned to hospital, petrified, because I had the fear of hell put in me that I would have a stroke, and be separated from my new baby. From this experience, I developed PTSD, moved cities to escape the trauma from living on the same street as that hospital, was counselled for a year and medicated for PNA and PTSD. I experienced severe panic about the whereabouts of my daughter constantly, and experienced nightmares. I experienced a panic attacks and anxiety related to post-partum high blood pressure experienced with my second daughter nearly 3 years later because of the hell I went through after my first birth.

Always trust a mother's instinct. Especially when its about the mother herself.

I am happy to provide evidence or speak at a hearing.