

Submission
No 1009

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I wanted to write a submission to inform you, of the birth trauma impacts to myself but as well as a positive second birth that I experienced in hope that there will be more support for women going forward.

Fundamentally I think the issue lies with the lack of funding for women's health in the same vein the lack of research into women's health. I do think this is isolated to Australia it seems to be a global problem.

My first birth was a twin birth, I was 30 years old otherwise fit and healthy I went to a public hospital. Having twins immediately excluded me from any MGP program, in fact, I did not ever have an appointment with a midwife. All my appointments were with several different obstetricians at the hospital, where I would say my average waiting time was over an hour. Having twin mean that I required more appointment and more scans, these scans were unable to be done at the hospital and needed to go to have private provider and pay for each scan.

My pregnancy was very good, both babies were growing each scan and the exact same size each and every scan. I felt pressured into booking a induction against my wishes, in fact I was booked in for an induction at 37 weeks, and it was not until I was at the hospital did they explain what would happen, and that my husband would be unable to stay with me whilst the was being done, I felt anxious and upset that I left the hospital without the induction. I did agree to a stretch and sweep before I left, however I felt as this was my only option to put off the induction looming a little longer. The next morning I was told I would need to come into the hospital for more testing, the obstetrician I saw made me feel belittled and made me feel like I was putting my babies lives at risk. She could not however tell me a good enough reason to proceed with the induction. We kept asking what were the risks and waiting a little longer would mean. Each time we asked we were told its just riskier based on statistic however were never provided with evidence based information. I believe they were pressuring me due to their hospital policies and was not looking at me and my situation.

I was given two stretch and sweeps within 12 hours. I do believe this led to an infection and I was therefore faced with an emergency caesarean. My twins were healthy however I ended up with the infection in my c-section, that saw me bed ridden. I could not walk over and pick up my babies, could not change their nappies, I could barely hold them close to me. Thankfully my husband was able to stay and help me. For a first time mother I was wheeled into a room and left to take care of two babies, the nurses would come in for their regular routine checks however I was not offered to see a lactation specialist, or offered anything other tests or help until one night I broke down due to the pain I was experiencing. I believe this experience cause me prenatal stress.

4 years later I was pregnant again, this time with a singleton, I immediately applied for the MGP I did not initially get a spot in the program, however managed to get one after some one had pulled out.

I can tell you that my experience without my dedicated midwife would have been far different. I know this, as my first experience with the hospital was going to the early pregnancy clinic. At 5 weeks I experienced bleeding, I was made to sit in front of other women assumably experiencing similar circumstances. One time I was there one lady was experiencing a miscarriage in front of me. I was at the hospital each time for over 3 hours only to be told they don't know why I am bleeding to come back in a few weeks, or some women bleed throughout their pregnancy and there was nothing they could do.

A few weeks in I spoke to an obstetrician as my wish was to have a VBAC, again I was in the hospital system being seen as 'high risk'. After speaking with the obstetrician I felt like how I was treated in my last pregnancy, that I would be seen as a statistic and that I would need to go along with the

hospital policies as I see as riskier than others. I felt like it was her role to try and put fear into me to go along with what they wanted and not what I wanted.

A week later I was lucky enough to get a spot in the MGP, this was a stark contrast to speaking with obstetricians. I immediately felt listened to and comforted, like she was on my side. This is how we improved birth trauma! This is the way in which each expecting mother should be treated, I did not have to wait hours for an appointment with her, she was able to visit my home. I was able to call or message her should I need to. She never made me feel like I had to do anything, she would provide me with the unbiased information and then would let me decide. She respected every decision that I made I did not feel judged or pressured by her. My baby was past its due date this started to cause me stress as I knew it would be hospital policy to start to intervene which I felt may lead to another caesarean. My midwife came to my appointment with the obstetrician and made me feel like I had the power to make informed decisions for me and my baby. Should I not be in this care model I would have felt immense pressure to have an intervention to meet hospital policies.

The day I went into labour my midwife was not on call, I however could speak to another midwife in her team, who I had met over zoom and she was able to talk me through what would happen and what I needed to do and when. When I was at the hospital I was admitted to the ward, again my husband was told he was not allowed to stay until the baby was born. My team of midwives arranged for him to be allowed to stay with me. My midwife came in at 1am in the morning to take me down to the labour ward. She was not rostered on until the morning however her just being there made me feel less anxious and a level of comfort knowing that she was there as my care provider. Any decision I needed to make I would ask her and know what she would make the right decision for me.

I had a successful VBAC and felt this was my healing birth.

In essence, my recommendations are:

- More funding for research and improved support for early pregnancy
- Access to midwifery group practice for everyone
- More funding for post-partum care