

Submission
No 1018

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

Birth trauma'

When I very first fell pregnant I knew it would be a struggle. I have spinal and pelvic issues that have required medical treatment for many years, There was always a question as to whether birthing a baby naturally would be possible for me due to my skeleton, I simply did not want to try and asked for a c-section. I brought this up with an obstetric doctor at my 12 week appointment and she said "the body is built for this, everything will stretch to facilitate a baby". After a lot of deliberation, I agreed to give a vaginal birth a go with strict instruction that I did not want instrumental delivery. I still had a strong feeling in my gut that a vaginal birth would not work and this baby was not going to come that way.

Finally I'm in labour. I arrived at the hospital at 10pm, 4 days late, only to be told that I was 3cm dilated after having contractions for the last 14 hours. I was offered to go home and wait until further dilated, I declined due to running out of hot water.

By 2am, the doctor on call advised that maybe we use a method to try and speed up the process as my waters still had not broken and I was dilating slowly and the contractions were doubling on each other. I was tired. I requested an epidural and agreed to have my waters manually broken and commence on an oxytocin drip.

Whilst waiting for an epidural, the doctor broke my waters and then I tried to relax and get some sleep, however I was then in very huge amounts of pain and could not get off the bed. CTG showed slowly heart rate but they were unsure if just a bad trace, a scalp monitor was inserted and again showing slow heart rate. I was in constant pain, there was no rest. The anaesthetist arrived and an epidural was performed whilst in agony and vomiting on the side of the bed. Babies heart rate was continually being hard to find. The senior obstetrician arrived and was doing an ultrasound, the pain was only getting worse, I was scared, my partner was scared. I felt as though something was wrong as I had shooting pains in my left side. I knew baby's heart rate was still low, my partner saw that they turned the monitor away so I couldn't see the numbers. I am a health professional, an emergency nurse. I had felt calm up until this point, I knew what was happening, I felt safe with my team around me however then a rapid response was called and I was signing paperwork and having my earrings taken out and rushed to the operating theatre. I asked if I could stay awake, they said no as there wouldn't be enough time to extend the epidural to a spinal. I couldn't say goodbye to my partner and all of a sudden I am being put to sleep...

I woke up in recovery, 90 mins after I went into theatre. My little girl was born at 6:36am with expectations of her having to be resuscitated, however, she was safe and she was healthy. The doctors did not have an explanation as to why she was in such distress. They wonder that breaking my waters put her into shock and she was not ready and also that she got stuck. I had a mild post-partum haemorrhage but was stable. I stayed in hospital for 2 nights, in a very full maternity ward, that I would never want to stay in again. The midwives are so overworked and busy that they do not get time to actually educate new mothers. I was so thankful to have my mum and sister on the other end of the phone to help me. My partner states the most traumatic part for him is when all the doctors and nurses ran into the room and he did not know what was happening – the nurse in charge filled him in about 5 minutes later and he was given surgical scrubs to put on. He cared for our daughter for the first 90 mins of her life.

Being a health professional, I can make sense of what happened during my birth, but I only wish my wishes were respected from the start. I am an educated woman, and my request was denied for my birth preference. I am just so thankful that I was in a hospital that was

able to handle emergencies such as mine. The system is very close to broken. There needs to be more education and more support for professionals and consumers.