

Submission
No 1335

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I was 22 years old and at 40 weeks pregnant with my first child. I went into spontaneous labour at home with the goal of an intervention free birth. When the pain was increasing I went to the maternity unit as I thought I was progressing in labour. I was taken to a room where the obstetrician came to 'assess' me. During that discussion he offered a stretch and sweep, which I clearly declined and verbalised that I did not want a stretch and sweep. He then continued and said I would be best to go home and continue to labour, which I was more than happy with. He offered if I would like to be 'checked' to see how far along I was. I replied 'Yes, but I do not want a stretch and sweep' (I had also verbalised this in my birth plan with the obstetrician I had seen at 36 weeks). Whilst performing a vaginal examination, I felt the worst and most intense pain, I started writhing on the table and screaming, to which he told my family to hold me down. My poor mother and partner at the time held me down for what felt like a very long time, the pain was intense and unbearable, worse than any pain I had experienced so far. After he had removed his fingers, he informed me he did a stretch and sweep and appeared to be pleased with himself. I repeat, I had not given consent for this procedure AND I had clearly stated to everyone included him I did not want a stretch and sweep. I left the hospital in shock, I did not feel safe, I later returned to the hospital with labour having progressed, he smugly told everyone what he did 'worked' and was happy I was back. During that labour he proceeded to do a further stretch and sweep without consent and was then pressuring me to have my waters broken. I then was forced to deliver on my back with all the lights on and him telling me if my child wasn't delivered within the next push they would be cannulating me and starting syntocinon (I had an intense fear of needles as a 22 year old). I forcefully pushed my baby out with immense fear. My labour was intervened with from the start, I was assaulted by the obstetrician and then pressured throughout my labour by the obstetrician to 'hurry'. I am very grateful for the midwife on, as without her and her advocacy I am sure it could have been even worse. As a result of this I am 30 years old and have not yet had a pap smear due to the fear and trauma from that stretch and sweep, I have also have significant pelvic floor issues requiring investigation which I am terrified for. as It makes me sick thinking of anyone doing investigations in my vagina. I have had an assessment from a womens health physio, which I remained brave for (and she was wonderful) but I cried post assessment and felt 'in shock' in the car afterwards.