

Submission  
No 1375

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

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Partially  
Confidential

During the birth of my first child at hospital, I was left to push for 3 hours in what was up to that point considered by the midwife to be a 'textbook labour', by which point my contractions had all but stopped as my uterine muscles had fatigued so greatly. It was only at 3hrs that the obstetrician came in and frustrated, threatened to 'use forceps to get the baby out if i didn't push it out'. I was a physically fit person and knew (not much about birth trauma or physical injuries from birth at that point) that only forceps weren't a good outcome for your body. I felt threatened and pushed the baby out with my pelvic floor and abdominals, suffering a second (nearly 3rd) degree tear in the process. I was told that outcome was ok because the baby was ok.

My daughter's head was subsequently measured to be 95% percentile and the baby was posterior - none of which was identified during labour.

I laid in the bed for 4hours (8pm-12 midnight) before a surgeon came to repair my tear. It took an hour and multiple lines of stiches to repair in front of a room of trainees who were brought in to observe. At the start of the 'repair' i was lying and could see a reflection of my vagina in the ceiling light in the room - it looked like a dropped watermelon. I was so upset and crying to the older midwife, as the younger one had left the room with a look of horror on her face when i tore. I sent the observing trainees, and the obstetrician assigned to me out of the room as she was also standing there observing the surgery and laughing to a colleague. I screamed that she did this to me and to get out - this was the only point i felt i had any control over the situation and to this day (almost 10years later) am so glad I voiced this. It was disrespectful treatment, disregard to the outcome for the mother, and traumatic.

My tear didn't heal properly and i returned to a private hospital and own obstetrician to undergo another repair at 4mo pp.

At 2yrs post partum i was diagnosed with PTSD from the birth as I had been having nightly flashbacks and recounting the birth prior to sleep each night. I have permanent damage to my pelvic floor, stress incontinence, have seen 3 PF physios and spent thousands on treatment, though as a former runner can no longer run long distances. This impact to my body and identity is something i still struggle with and generally best avoid thinking about too deeply.

I am a post graduate scientist and was 34yo at the time. I have never been treated so badly by a set of medical professionals and am vocal with anyone who is about to go into their first birth about my experience, birth injuries both physical and mental, and advocate for cesarean sections and private obstetricians to anyone. I now have 2 daughters (second one CS with obstetrician who repaired me at 4mo), and will be advising them to both have CS if they choose to have a family. My CS was the exact opposite to my first birth - respectful, happy, and focused both on mother and baby, with no complications to either of us. Not everyone has the access to private care or this level of choice. The level of education around birth preparation and birth injury currently for new mothers, outside of hearing about war stories, is zero. As an educated person and scientist, i knew nothing. Overwhelmingly you hear from the 30% of people who have had uncomplicated births, but there is a silent majority and medical profession who are impacting women's mental and physical health, and that needs to change, and this inquiry is long overdue.