

Submission  
No 1420

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
Confidential

While I know many women have much worse experiences, my negative experience post birth has been bothering me for almost two years now so I felt I would share.

At my dating scan in February 2021, we found out that I have a fibroid uterus including a large subserosal fibroid. I didn't apply for the Midwifery Group Practice because I knew I wouldn't get a spot so for continuity of care, we decided to go with a private obstetrician and chose one on the recommendation of our family GP and because she advertised she did routine ultrasounds in her office at check-ups.

Due to the fibroids, I had ultrasounds regularly (at least 5) to check the growth of both the baby and the fibroids and they then also discovered a placental lobe which they also monitored. I was told this did not cause any issues/risks, they just check it to make sure it all comes out when with the placenta at the birth. I also elected to have a planned caesarean as this was explained/advised to be the safest option because of my fibroids.

At my last appointment with the obstetrician, a week before my planned caesarean, she told me I had a "textbook pregnancy, except for the fibroids".

In October 2021, I went to \_\_\_\_\_ Private Hospital as planned for my planned caesarean at 39 weeks. Whilst they were performing the caesarean the obstetrician said I had undiagnosed placenta previa. My baby was born with the aid of forceps and apart from being quite bruised, he was healthy. My obstetrician came to see me the afternoon of the birth and when the placenta previa was brought up she shrugged it off and said it was 'lucky we had a planned caesarean'.

I stayed in hospital for 6 days and was in quite a lot of pain. I had to ask for pain medication and felt like I was overreacting to the pain. I felt pressured to shower the evening of my caesarean and even though I was having problems with breastfeeding I was not informed about the lactation specialist for days. I was not encouraged to walk and stayed in room the entire time.

I was then sent home with no pain medication and was told to get some Panadol and voltaren. My first night at home I woke up in the night to feed my baby and I could not get up from laying on my back in my flat bed. I called the birthing wing at \_\_\_\_\_ Private Hospital in excruciating pain and told them that I could not get out of bed. Their response was that I must have overdone it, that lots of new mums do that and to see my GP tomorrow if it was still bad. When I said I physically couldn't get up from laying in my bed they told me to call an ambulance if that's what I thought I needed. They showed no empathy or concern and I felt embarrassed to have called them and felt ashamed because they made me feel like I could not handle the pain. I did not feel it was an emergency for an ambulance to be called and my husband had to pull me up. I nearly blacked out it was so painful, and I slept sitting up on the couch for weeks after this. I still have flashbacks to this feeling when getting out of bed and am angry I was not informed of how to safely get out of a flat bed by hospital staff before going home. At the hospital, I had been using the hospital bed buttons and handrail to get up.

I also felt uncared for as I had no postpartum care until my scheduled 6 week check-up. However, when I was due to go in to see the obstetrician for my 6 week check up, they called and wanted to reschedule my appointment. The next available appointment was in 2 weeks time as she could not fit me in before that. They then called and cancelled that check up too and told me to see my GP instead. When I called to explain I wanted to see the obstetrician, they said her next available appointment was in February. I agreed to take that but she then told me I would have to get a new referral from my GP because it would no longer be an obstetrics appointment it would be a gynaecological appointment. I was not happy and they reluctantly offered me a telehealth appointment with the obstetrician two days later, 10 weeks postpartum. During the phone call with the obstetrician, I felt my questions were ignored, she did not address the placenta previa and I felt gaslighted.

When I went to the GP for my son's 6 week check up, the doctor also asked me a few questions then cleared me to drive. I took it upon myself to see a pelvic floor physio as I was uncomfortable that my wound/stomach had not been checked since I left the hospital. When I went to see my family GP to get a referral for a 6 month ultrasound check up on the fibroids, she said my birth must have been quite scary as my obstetrician's notes said I 'presented at hospital in labour at 39 weeks, 3cm dilated and with heavy blood loss'. It also says, 'On examination, the placenta was low and partially covered the cervix and an emergency LSCS was preformed.' This is not at all what happened. I had no vaginal bleeding my entire pregnancy. I arrived at the hospital on time for my planned caesarean and as far as I knew I was not in labour as I had not felt any contractions. It wasn't until I had had my epidural and was on the table that my obstetrician arrived and began the procedure. I was not examined before that. At no point were my husband or I told it was an emergency and my hospital discharge papers also state 'Elective Lower Segment Caesarean Section'.

When I went for the scan at 6 months post-partum to check my fibroids, the sonographer was shocked when I said I had undiagnosed placenta previa. They looked back at my last scan and said they didn't see any placenta previa and asked if I was I sure that's what happened.

I am angry that I don't actually know what happened to me or if/how this could affect future pregnancies, but I feel like I was not cared for properly and that my life and the life of my baby were in danger and it is just lucky that we are both okay. I feel like my questions were brushed off and that something is being hidden from me. This has negatively contributed to my thoughts of having another child and has led to a lack of trust in healthcare professionals. I feel I was prevented access to continuity of care because my private obstetrician, whom I paid a lot of money, did not have time/did not want to see me. I felt like I was a money maker and once my baby was born, I was thrown to the curb.

I would like to see better post-partum care for women in hospitals and once they leave the hospital.