

Submission
No 1383

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I gave birth to my daughter at _____ Hospital in October 2020. I was not provided with continuity of care throughout my pregnancy. I applied for the MGP but was not accepted in to the program. Due to the pandemic I only saw a health professional face-to-face a handful of times throughout my pregnancy. I went into labour spontaneously at around 6am on 5 October 2020. I laboured at home through the day and night until I decided to present to the Birthing Unit at around 3am on 6 October 2020. The midwife who was assessing me performed a vaginal examination and stated that I was 2cm dilated and that they would be giving me pain relief and sending me home. I am allergic to codeine, so they gave me morphine. I was not told of any risks associated with taking this medication. They performed a CTG and a doctor was asked to come and review the results, at which point they told me that they “couldn’t let me leave” due to the readings on my daughter’s heart and that I could either go and wait it out on the maternity ward or they could get me started with an induction. They started talking about risks to the health of my baby and noted that my baby could be stillborn if I refused an induction. My husband and I were first time parents and were terrified that our decisions could possibly lead to the death of our child, so we went along with their recommendation for an induction. I was around 4cm dilated when they broke my waters and hooked me up to the Syntocinon. I was in an incredible amount of pain within 15 minutes of the drip starting and I laboured for a couple of hours before I was offered an epidural, which I accepted. When my midwife went on her break, another midwife came in to relieve her and shamed me for having an epidural and implied that I shouldn’t be telling everyone how great they feel because having an epidural isn’t the right thing to do. A short time later I notified the midwives that I had the urge to push, and they told me I wasn’t due for a check for 2 more hours. I insisted that they check me and I was fully dilated. I began to push and then an emergency button was hit and the room was flooded with people. The bed was broken down and my feet were put up in stirrups and I was laid naked on the bed with approximately 10-15 strangers in the room. They told me that they would be using a vacuum and giving me an episiotomy. They did not ask my consent. They did not stop even when I said “no” and began to cry. They just cut my perineum against my will and attached a vacuum to my babies head which failed after two attempts. They did not explain the risks involved with a ventouse, they just did it. When that didn’t work they used forceps and pulled my baby from my body with incredible force. She was born at 3:51pm on 6 October 2020. My baby was born perfectly healthy and was able to stay on my chest for hours after her birth. I was moved to the maternity ward at around 7:30pm and my husband was ejected from the ward at 8pm per the hospital visiting hours, just 4 hours and 9 minutes after his daughter was born, leaving me alone in a hospital room with a freshly cut and stitched perineum which made even sitting to breastfeed my daughter so painful to the point of being impossible. My daughter was left with an enormous bruise on the back of her head from the ventouse which meant that she could not be set down in the bassinet due to the pain from her bruise and I had to hold her all night after already having been awake for 2 days straight. I was not supported well in the immediate hours after my daughters birth. Barely a check up, and certainly not anyone offering breastfeeding support. The doctor came in the following morning to check my stitches and when I complained of lower back pain I was very casually told that they may have fractured my tailbone with the forceps delivery - no further investigation or follow up treatment was produced. Due to the lack of support in the hospital, I asked to be discharged the day after my daughter’s birth and was told that a midwife would be out to my home the following day for a check up. They didn’t show up, and it turns out that my name was lost in the system and no follow up appointments were ever booked. A midwife didn’t come for a home visit until my third day at home. I ended up with a diagnosis of postpartum depression (27/30 on the Edinburgh Depression Scale) within a month of giving birth and had suicidal thoughts. I could not shake the helplessness, the fear and the complete loss of power that I felt during the birth of my beautiful girl.

I had hoped for a calm, peaceful, medication free, intervention free water birth. Instead I got a terrifying, traumatising birth full of interventions and a mode of delivery which has left me with lasting discomfort due to the episiotomy scar and a prolapse from the forceps. I have made the decision not to have any more children due to the fact that I cannot bare the thought of having to birth another baby.

It has been almost 3 years since my daughter was born and I still live with the trauma of her birth, it haunts me. Something needs to be done about this. I cannot let the same thing happen to my daughter if/when she chooses to have a baby.