

**Submission  
No 1394**

## **INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA**

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**Date Received:** 11 August 2023

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Following the birth of my eldest son at 34 weeks gestation, I was classed as a high risk pregnancy. However due to the circumstances surrounding my first child's birth, it was determined that although he arrived prematurely I wasn't going to be managed as a high risk of having another premature birth as I wasn't "in labour" with my first child although I was in the early stages of it with him and experiencing contractions every 30 minutes. I was worried about the fact that I wasn't being managed as someone who could have another premature birth.

My second pregnancy was not nearly as smooth as my first pregnancy and I found myself at 5:30am on 21/10/2022 being woken up with the early stages on labour and having contractions every 30 minutes or so. As the morning went on and I started to monitor the contractions, I contacted the hospital and let them know what I was experiencing and due to all my complications and history they told me to come in for some monitoring. I arrive at the hospital around 12:30pm and eventually I'm put into a room for some monitoring. I'm seen by the midwives and there starts to be some concerns around my babies heart rate dropping (which is what happened with my first). They tell me the doctor who is in charge will take a look at it. I ended up dozing off and woke up to someone in the room looking at the readings from the monitor who says "oh no they are fine, I'm happy with that" and walked out. I had no idea who this person was and they didn't even say hello to me when I woke up. After a short period the midwife came back in and I asked when the doctor would come see me and she tells me she had just been in the room. I was gobbedsmacked that it had been the doctor in the room. I felt completely ignored by them and i hadn't even been given a chance to ask any questions about what was going on.

The contractions then started to really kick in and I was examined to see how far dialated I was, which was not that far at all. However my contractions were really starting to ramp up and become longer, more painful and not as much break between. Around 8pm I asked about stronger pain relief as the endone I had been given felt like it wasn't even touching the side and was informed that I needed to be in the birthing suite for that. By the time they were moving me to the birthing suits I had completely lost all track of time due to my contractions being roughly every 2 minutes and horrificly painful.

As soon I was placed in the birthing suites I begged for pain relief that would take the edge off as it felt like I hadn't taken anything at that stage. I was told I needed to wait while decisions were being made. My pain was now at a stage where I was screaming in pain every time I had a contraction which was roughly every 1-2 minutes. When I first got to the birthing suites, one of the first things I did was vomit from the horrible pain I was in. When I begged again for them to make the pain stop I was told "this is just labour" which did not sit well with me as I knew something didn't feel right about this labour. They also continually told me that I wasn't actually in labour, due to not being dialated enough. This made me feel like absolute shit with how much pain I was feeling. I then got to a stage where I was swearing and screaming and I heard one of the health professionals in the room say "I'm going to get someone as I'm worried she is going to pass out from pain" which I had thought at the time would be better then what I was going through. I continued to beg and ask them for help/pain relief and no one explained anything to me.

While all this was happening, I was aware that there was also some concerns going on for my baby in regards to his heart rate dropping which is the main reason why my oldest son was delivered early. At this point I have a full on anxiety attack because I have no idea what is going on as no one has explained anything to me around what decisions they are making and why they hadn't made the decision to do an emergency c-section like they did with my oldest. (It took a family friend a few days after my birth to explain what happens to babies heart rate during labour for me to understand why they weren't doing a c-section).

So to recap, I was in horrific pain and begging for any pain relief but was being told I couldn't have it and I knew my babies heart rate was dropping and it was a concern but they hadn't made the choice to do a c-section. At this stage it was the early hours of the morning on 22/10/2022 and I said, I can't do this, please just cut this baby out of me. It was at this point that a doctor who was present finally explained to me that it wasn't as simple as that. She stated that because I was 33 weeks, they would prefer for me to have a vaginal birth however if I had made that choice at this stage and I had been 36 weeks it would be a different story. I just couldn't understand what she was telling me due to how much pain I was in. Due to the comment about this just being labour I also felt that I was just being a sook so when I did have little breaks between contractions, I was apologising to all the staff about being a sook, which I look back now and know is absolutely ridiculous that I was made to feel this way by one comment.

It finally got to a stage around 3:30am, that I was given a shot of morphine to try and take the edge off and about 30 minutes later I was told the decision had been made that I would have an emergency c-section. I have never felt so much relief in my life knowing an end to this paralysing pain was in sight.

At 4:43am, almost 24 hours after the contractions had started my son was born. I knew of course from my first experience that he would be taken straight to NICU. However what I wasn't prepared for was the insane amount of bruising that was on his face. His whole face was one giant bruise and a totally different colour to his body from lashing against me for 24 hours straight with every contraction. During his stay in NICU he was treated twice under the lights for jaundice due to how much bruising was on his face that his little liver struggled to help it heal. His eyes were bruised for the whole stay in NICU (25 days) and every nurse or doctor that came in contact with him made a comment about the bruising. Every time I look at pictures of him from back then, I struggle with the bruising that is there and it brings back the memories of that 24 hours.

The one time during the whole experience that I felt listened to and in control was at some stage in the birthing suits where I stated I felt like I needed to push and they supported me to push.