

Submission
No 1471

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

In April 2021 I welcomed my first baby into the world. I've had many friends victim to obstetric violence in the system so I engaged with a private practising midwife and elected to have a homebirth. I was lucky enough to be a healthy low risk pregnancy and also be able to financially fund a private midwife.

Prior to conception I met with my midwife and for 2 hours we spoke about what her model of care involved and what I wanted out of it.

Over the next 10 months my midwife was available to me 24/7, all blood tests and scans were ordered through my midwife and I did not have to engage with a GP which was great, as at the time I didn't have one I knew well.

Over the course of my pregnancy each appointment was at my Midwives home and went for minimum 1 hour, I was heard, listened to and never rushed. I was treated as the individual that I am.

The night I went into labour I was so happy to be at home, I couldn't imagine having to travel to hospital and have unfamiliar faces intruding in my space during such a sacred milestone in my life.

We texted our midwife and told her I was in labour and approximately 8 hours later asked her to come over as I was progressing.

She arrived and brought her calming safe presence with her. I felt so safe with her.

She would check my temperature and babies heart rate with a Doppler, she assisted in applying pressure to my back and giving me beautiful words of encouragement and support.

Everything was going so well, until she detected 1 single episode of foetal distress in babies heart rate. Our second midwife called an ambulance and my midwife explained what was happening, where we were going and what to expect. It was very important to me to not have unnecessary intervention, and I wanted informed consent before any decisions were made.

At the hospital the hospital midwife told me to "be quiet" and that I was using too much energy "making noises". I was also asked to lay flat on my back with my legs in stirrups.

When the obstetrician arrived, I felt so safe having my midwife by my side, I knew I was advocated for and I would be listened too.

The obstetrician told me when I was having a contraction (when I was not) based purely on the monitor and dismissed me when I told her "I've been having contractions for 12 hours without drugs, I know when I'm having a contraction". The obstetrician told me "baby has to be out in 3 contractions otherwise I'm using the suction" - despite me making it very clear under no circumstances were suction or forceps to be placed on my baby. The obstetrician also said she wanted me on the drip to speed up contractions as they had slowed a bit (stress will do that), I said "no thank you, the drip causes foetal distress- why we are here"

My husband said the suction was out of the sterile packaging, ready to go.

I consented to an episiotomy, and I explained that I need more local anaesthetic than the average person, while being stitched up I began to feel the sutures in my muscle layer (despite giving birth to a 4.3kg baby with not a single drug) the obstetrician told me "you can't feel it, you've had local" when I requested more local I was told by her to "suck on the gas" - I made it this far without having to "suck on the gas" I didn't want it now. My midwife had to really persuade the obstetrician to give me more local anaesthetic to continue.

When my baby was born the midwife tried to interrupt babies first breastfeed to do her measurements. My private midwife politely asked her to return when baby was finished. Later on the hospital midwife stripped baby naked and took her measurements and commented that babies breathing rate was a bit rapid and she wanted to call the paediatrician and possibly take her to

special care nursery. My private midwife literally said "you've just taken baby off mum, stripped her naked, poked and prodded her and shoved her under bright lights ofcourse she's got elevated breathing - perhaps well do some skin to skin with dad while mum showers and reasses babies breathing then" I could not believe how easily hospitals will jump to unnecessary intervention and separate mums and babies. Ofcourse the skin to skin worked, it's exactly what nature intended.

After my shower both myself and baby were fine, I asked to discharge myself and the hospital midwife informed me "the paediatrician is refusing to see you, and said if you have any problems with baby don't come back here, he won't see if you discharge"

Baby was 100% healthy and well, our private midwife lives 10 minutes from our home and provides 6 weeks of post partum care, daily for the first 5 days and is available 24/7 as we need.

I really wanted to share my story, I think it highlights the errors in the system, it highlights the unnecessary intervention, making women not trust their bodies or babies and detaching us from our babies. My story also highlights the amazing benefits of having continuity of care, how amazing a private midwife is and in my nstance really saved me from unnecessary interventions.

When I have another baby, I have no doubt in my mind, I will have the same midwife again and I will have a homebirth.

I also felt in my experience I was safe, protected and advocated for in the hospital environment because I had my private midwife by my side, and I'm well informed and I knew exactly what I did and did not want.