

Submission
No 1456

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 15 August 2023

Partially
Confidential

My third baby. Was horrific. He is turning two next month and I can't, still to this day think of his birth. My waters broke 8 weeks early. During lockdown in 2021. I was admitted to hospital as my waters were leaking. They were going to try extend my labour by another 9 days so I could hit the 32 week mark. During that time I was completely isolated from everyone I love. Even though my two other kids had only had me at home for the whole lock down (they were 4 and 2 years old), they were never leaving the house so their risk to exposure was tiny, I was still not allowed to see them. I wasn't even allowed outside the hospital. I couldn't even leave the floor I was on. Although I was about to have my world turned upside with a premature baby. I wasn't even allowed out, on my own to get fresh hair. By the 5th day I was crying, my mental health was declining. I felt like I was in jail. My husband on the other hand, could come and go from the hospital as he pleased!! Only needed a RAT test every 3 days. But I couldn't walk to the sidewalk and wave at my kids in the car? Even stand outside under a tree for half an hour and feel the sunshine on my skin. It was horrific. Was a way to lead up to a premature birth. With my mental health declining, I felt weak.

My contractions hit at midnight, 34 weeks on the dot.

I developed a fever, they believed it was an infection somewhere but nothing could be pinpointed what was happening. My midwife missed my vein twice while trying to get antibiotics in to me. I had an epidural and it was excruciating. I cried and had to be laid down as I got lightheaded. (Had epidurals with other two pregnancies and it was nothing like it). I was given drugs to speed up the labour as I wasn't dilating. It made babies heart rate drop. While my OB explained it was looking like I would need an emergency caesarean. While I was having this explained, while I was crying and terrified I had midwives leaning across, pulling my undies down to shave my pubic area. No waiting to ask if it could happen, if she could do it. I was crying and in a state and she didn't care. I hadn't even agreed to the caesarean yet. I asked for 20 more minutes to see if things progressed and my OB agreed. While waiting this 20 mins the same midwife came back and started putting my surgery compression socks on. I said to her "can we please wait" and she responded along the lines of - "you must know you're going to have to go in". I felt completely dismissed.

When taken in for surgery. I felt like a piece of meat. No one really introduced themselves other than the one to give anaesthesia. I kept saying I could feel things and he kept saying it was impossible. They cut me open and I cried. I felt it. Not 100% of the pain. But I felt it. I had tears streaming down my face. My baby was born, who I held for 20 seconds. He was wheeled away to another floor because of his prematurity. My husband had left. While I'm as laying on the table being stitched up, the assisting doctor to my OB said to a nurse "well it's not nice being called in on a Sunday but at least it's over and done with early", the nurse responded, "yes least we can still enjoy the sunshine". While I was alone, exposed, terrified. They were worried about having the rest of their Sunday to enjoy?!

I was left in recover on my own. No one round as it was a private hospital on a Sunday. Finally I was taken to my room. I laid in a state of shock all day. I couldn't cry, I couldn't talk. I stared at the ceiling. My baby was on the other side of the floor to me. No one asked if I wanted to see him, to work something out. He was born at 9:30am and I didn't get to see him til 6pm that night. I couldn't lift him, I wasn't allowed - only put one hand on his chest. From then on the next 4 weeks we're a nightmare. I was told I wasn't allowed to hold my baby for more than an hour a day. That he needed his sleep and he couldn't manage a decent sleep on me. I kept asking to breastfeed, but was denied. That it wouldn't work because he was too small. (He was 2.8kg at birth, some full term babies are born at that size!) but I wasn't even given a chance, my baby wasn't given a chance. After 4 weeks, I had to fight to get him to come home. It felt like they wanted to keep him there to cover themselves, to dot every i and cross every t even though he was ticking all their boxes in his development. I would go outside the hospital and cry because I was forced to sit next to his bed and not touch him, feed him, love on him.