

Submission  
No 1447

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Name suppressed

**Date Received:** 15 August 2023

---

Partially  
Confidential

Please treat my story with care, it is hard to write however I do so in the hope that I will be heard, and from that women will have a better birthing experience. Thank you for conducting this enquiry.

In 2015 at 42 weeks pregnant with my first child I was induced after two weeks of pressure to induce labour because I was 39 years old. I was given all the worst-case scenarios to cause fear and to make me agree to an induction even though there was no indication my baby was in trouble. 42 weeks in still within the natural length of a pregnancy. There was also no continuity of care, each time I went into an appointment I saw a different doctor, many of whom were junior and still reading from a text book. Prior to 40 weeks of pregnancy I was seeing midwives for check-ups however as soon as 40 weeks passed I was handed over to doctors without a midwife or advocate present and no prior warning that was about to happen.

The process to induce labour started late at night, the thinking by the hospital was I would be given the gel and then get some sleep and start labour in the morning. I was given an endone tablet that I now regret taken, I didn't know really know what it was or that it was an opioid. I did not go to sleep and laboured started and I laboured all through the night and by the time the sun came up I was exhausted. Having birthed two children, one in 2015 and one in 2019, I know that an induced labour is much harder than a spontaneous labour. I was strapped to a monitor so that I could not really move around which was so hard as I could not walk the pain out as I did when I birthed my second child. At some point during the early morning my baby's heart rate started to dip and my water was broken at which point the midwives saw that meconium was present. The doctors were in the room by then, my baby's head was visible, and a doctor was coaching me to push. I was flat on my back and it was very difficult, because the labour was not spontaneous my body was not in the flow of labour and all the forced pushing did was damage me and caused hemorrhoids that I think will probably required surgery and still cause pain 8 years on. I'm sure all the forced pushing contributed to incontinence following the birth of my son. At this point it was decided to do a forceps delivery. I was given a local anesthetic around my vagina and the doctor cut the side of my vagina open with a pair of scissors while another doctor pushed the forceps into my vagina to grasp my son's head. All this occurred while my legs were in stirrups with a team of people watching. I have never been sexually assaulted and I know that is not what happened during my child's birth however I cannot find another phrase to describe what was happening me, I felt completely violated. After the birth of my son, the room cleared and I was left with one doctor and a midwife, the doctor stitched my vagina back together, I did not know the extent of the damage that had been done, I thought it was a small cut, 2-4cm long as described in birthing classes but that was not the case. Let me say at this point that the doctors and midwives in the room were caring and kind however the process and actions taken in the room left me reeling for a long time. It is a difficult place to be mentally to be surrounded by people who are caring but are still took actions that made me feel violated and damaged.

I discovered during the course of the day that I was now incontinent and had no control over my bladder. I was checked as being okay and sent home the following day, having spent only one night in the maternity ward. It took about a week for my body to recover some level of continence and I had to sit on a rubber ring for about 6 weeks as I could not even sit on a sofa without pain and discomfort from the hemorrhoids and the damage done by the episiotomy. All of this was considered normal by the midwives who visited our home. It is not normal and if this is normal it needs to change. In what other situation would it be okay to cut open a

woman's vagina with a pair of scissors, send them home the next day and never check or debrief why it happened and how they are coping, and if they need support or further medical treatment. The episiotomy and effort to stitch the wound still feels as though I have been mutilated for life even if I can bring myself to go through the process of having surgery to try to repair the damage.

Fast forward 4 years and I gave birth to my daughter in a birthing pool with two midwives and my husband present, it was a busy night so I didn't see or hear from a doctor. It was wonderful, I birthed my daughter without forced coaching and without pain relief as the warm water provided. I only needed one stitch after the birth of my daughter in 2019. The midwife did comment on the damage to my vagina from the previous birth as she did the small repair.

My hope is that the following is implemented:

1. There needs to be continuity of care for all women. That means they see the same midwife who they trust and can be their support and advocate.
2. A forceps delivery should not be classified as a natural birth because it is not, it is an instrumental or mechanical birth and proper support should be given to women following this type of intervention, not just glossed over as a natural.
3. Do not put unnecessary pressure on women leading up to the birth with worst case scenarios to make them worry, it affects the mind of the birthing woman and the subsequent labour.
4. Ensure that women are properly educated about the risk of episiotomy and forceps delivery.
5. Ensure that support services are clearly articulated to women. It feels like once you leave the hospital the doors are closed and there is no one to seek answers from who were present in the room during labour and birth.