

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Organisation: Hygieia Health Ltd

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Partially
Confidential

We (Hygieia Health) have transcribed this birth story and experience of trauma on behalf of a mother named . Please note that everything following this sentence is in her own words:

The actual birthing day of my son was a wonderful experience however the pre-natal care I received was filled with a lot of unnecessary stresses.

I was an older mum/-to-be and was told at 21 weeks to go ahead and book an induction or Cesarean, my choice. This was shocking to me. I was not given any reason as to why I needed to follow this as my birth plan. The OBGYN simply said that due to my age that was the 'safest' way forward for my baby. I found this terrifying.

At 28 weeks I was diagnosed as GDM. In other countries, I would not have been GDM as my score was quite low however Australia recently changed their diagnosis limits and I came in just over the line.

At 32 weeks my blood sugar levels were getting worse, despite drastic changes to my diet and lifestyle so I was recommended to start insulin and saw a diabetes specialist. I decided to go ahead with insulin starting on low doses. I was not told that the insulin would not impact the baby and this was the safest way forward. I was concerned but followed this medical advice.

At 36 weeks my blood levels stabilised and started to normalise - however the diabetes specialist told me to increase my daily insulin. I questioned why and was just better to be safe. I pushed back and the specialist admitted there was no real reason to change anything at this late.

Overall my partner and I found the whole experience working with the diabetes specialist extremely frustrating.

During all this, my pregnancy was tracking along perfectly, the baby was growing well, every scan was normal and there was no reason to doubt my body could naturally birth my baby. My midwife was very supportive and always let me know that there was no reason to not go ahead with a natural birth.

However despite this, every OBGYN that I saw in the public hospital system put constant pressure on me to book in either an induction or C-section.

My partner and I queried this pressure time and time again, and at no point was any doctor able to justify exactly why I should not proceed with trying for a natural birth.

One OGBYN actually said ‘because the birth suites schedule is getting full and if I don’t book now I might not get an appointment on the day I wanted’” to which my partner laughed and commented that if it was an emergency then I am sure they would be able to fit me in?!

The only vague justification we were ever given was that due to my age and GDM, it was ‘safer’ otherwise something might happen to my baby.

There was NO medical reasoning - all scans showed the baby was growing perfectly well and normal.

In the end, I birth my son naturally with a 6 hour labour, on Valentines day 2022 at Hospital

I felt prepared - also excited and nervous but ultimately knew I had made the right choices for myself.

We had a solid birth plan and my partner knew exactly what do should any twists and turns occur during the birth.

Our birth plan was suggested by our doula and at no time was it suggested we have a birth plan by anyone in the medical profession.

The mid-wives we worked with during pregnancy and at our birth in public hospital were amazing. They were very open-minded and encouraged me to proceed with a natural birth unless something unexpected arose

Also after birth my son was given a prick blood test every hour – after 24hrs his bloods were perfectly fine. No abnormalities. They wanted to proceed with pricking him for another 24hrs but I refused as it was obviously causing him pain and stress, he had been on Earth less than a day and was being subjected to unnecessary pain.

My recovery was perfect. My son was perfect. My birth was perfect. Yet the hospital also told me to stay 2 nights. I signed a release form and left the day after birth as I wanted to be home with my baby and recovery in my own surroundings. There was no need to be at the hospital, which was cold and lonely without my partner.

My partner was involved through every step of the birth of our son. He truly was my rock.

The Doctors often left me feeling vulnerable and scared –a hard state to make decisions in when you are heavily pregnant!

My partner kept me grounded and encouraged me to follow my intuition – top follow our own birth path, which we knew was right for us.

Our doula encouraged him how to pushed back when needed, how and what questions to ask on my behalf and gave him a lot of support which in turn helped him to support me.

During the birth, he kept us on the path we knew was right for us - which ultimately lead to one of the greatest experiences of my life.

I feel that my age should not have instantly been a barrier to a natural birth. This was unnecessary stress.

I needed to be given information which justified the advice I was getting.

I did not need the guilt, shame and fear that came along with being an older mother or being categorised as GDM which instantly put up barriers to wanting to proceed with natural birth. My GDM status meant the hospital would not allow me a water birth which I desperately wanted.

From start to end, the medical advice I was given was conflicting, confusing and based more on what was convenient for the doctors schedules than what was actually right for my baby and my body.

We found the higher up the specialist was the worst the advice was. The best advice we received was from our doula and our midwife.

I am definitely more wary when doctors give advice now and have learnt to always ask questions and to ask 'why' or 'what if we don't do anything?'

I have no issue with medical advice however have seen 1st hand how medical policies can interfere and that you cannot always trust what you are told. You need to keep your wits about you, ask a lot of questions and make your own judgement based on the information you are given mixed with your intuition.

I was so focused on being a new mum in the first few months that I did not fully take care of my mental health, which later suffered.

We focused a lot on recovery of the physical body and allowed the time to for healing however due to a natural flood disaster 2 weeks post-birth then an unexpected move interstate, my mental health suffered.

16mths later and I only just feel like I am starting to find my feet again and understand my new role as a mother.