

My son was due 12th September 2011 and the pregnancy had been difficult due to stress related issues but otherwise a normal pregnancy.

A week before I was due, I couldn't feel my son move all morning and a strange rash had appeared all over my body so I went to hospital to check everything was normal.

I was a very small size still during my pregnancy until I got to 34 weeks and suddenly I was huge!

During my check up at the hospital I told the staff that I felt I needed a scan as I was sure he was a very big baby. The midwives measured my bump and said I was a normal size for how far gone I was and explained that they don't do scans for birth weight and they base it on the parents' birth weight. I explained my partner was 10 and a half pounds when he was born but the midwives still refused to give me a scan as I was only 7lbs at birth.

Established labour started at 2.30am 13th September and I was over the moon as my son was only hours over his due date. From what I had read and been told by friends and family who have had children, I was expecting the contractions to start fairly mild and far apart so I was shocked at the intensity of the contractions from the start. My contractions were so strong I could barely move. I lived alone so I called my dad to come and take me to the hospital as I was contracting every 3 minutes since established labour had begun.

We got to the hospital around 6.30am and sod's law was the lifts weren't working so I had to try and climb 4 flights of stairs in absolute agony. We arrived on the ward and I was checked and told I was 3-4cm and in established labour so they would keep me in while it progressed.

My contractions were so intense I was vomiting through every one of them. I hadn't eaten since the previous afternoon and soon became very dehydrated. Everytime the midwives came in and gave me water, I threw it back up - this happened throughout the entire day.

I told the midwife there that I wanted a water birth so they went to prep the room for me. I was given gas and air but that made me more sick. I was in so much pain however that I stuck to it. My first midwife was amazing; she rubbed my back and when I was trying to distract myself from the pain by asking her questions, we had a long chat which kept me calm and she kept praising me for being so quiet and calm. The pain got so intense she offered me pethadine which I accepted (I had a very extreme phobia of needles so this was a big deal for me). The pethadine wasn't effective on me, it made me feel more sleepy but didn't numb the pain at all, I just felt less able to cope with it.

Unfortunately then the shift change-over occurred and the second midwife came around 3.30. The woman was horrible, she wouldn't look at me, touch me or talk to me. She sat with her back to me writing things in my maternity notes. She had no appreciation of how long I had been in labour for or how much pain I was in. When she did finally talk to me to ask me anything she spoke down to me and when I said I felt that something wasn't right, she treated me like an insolent child, an inconvenience to her. I had been contracting every 3 minutes since 2.30am, I'd had nothing to eat or drink and was beginning to get delirious. I was beginning to panic so I asked the midwife if I could have an epidural for the pain. I was told I didn't need one and to keep going. I asked for another dose of pethadine and was told no. About an hour later I asked for a c-section as I couldn't cope anymore and felt very weak. The midwife refused but duly agreed to check me to see how far dilated I was.

She checked me around 5pm and told me I was 4-5 cm, only 1cm further in the 10 1/2 hours I had been there. I was so upset and scared at how much longer it would take and so fed up with the agony that I felt would never end that I broke down and sobbed. I clung to my dad who was my birthing partner and begged him to take the pain away as I couldn't take it anymore. My dad told the midwife to do something for me as he'd never seen me in such a state so he knew something wasn't right. She eventually agreed to break my waters but wouldn't do so until I got to 7cm.

During my breakdown I begged her again for another dose of Pethadine as she wasn't going to let me have an epidural. She agreed to give me another dose and went and got the supplies. When she came back I was still crying and having a panic attack. She walked round the side of me and without warning, rammed the needle into my leg and did the same with the second needle then walked out the room. My first midwife had been gentle and caring with me but this woman seemed like she was determined to make me feel as much pain as possible!

I was trying to keep moving around the room still because I had heard before that to walk can help labour progress faster (except now I was limping). My dad was furious with her but couldn't leave me on my own to go and complain because of the state I was in. She had left the door open however and we overheard her talking to one of the other midwives in the corridor. Apparently there was a 'friendly competition' going on between the birthing unit (where I was) and the delivery suite (where they administer the epidurals) and she told her colleague that I had asked for an epidural but she felt I could do it without one and they 'needed to get their numbers up as the delivery suite midwives were winning'. Her colleague agreed but I don't feel any hate towards her as she had no idea what I had been through and hadn't seen me at all. It's hard to describe how scared I was after hearing that, it felt like this horrible woman would rather see me feel every bit of pain regardless of how bad it was than let me have the pain relief I so desperately needed. My poor dad had witnessed everything throughout the day so far and he found it very hard to control his anger with her and keep quiet but knew he had to as they will throw out anyone who is aggressive towards a member of staff.

She broke my waters around 8pm and I passed meconium (baby's first poo) signalling the baby's distress. By this time I was past caring about the health of my son and just wanted the ordeal over. That sounds horrible and selfish but I honestly felt like I was dying by that time. I had never felt so weak and vulnerable in all my life.

The midwife brought in someone to check my waters. The woman who checked my waters was a godsend; she took one look at me, checked the meconium and stated I needed an epidural urgently. I was then put in a wheelchair and rushed to the delivery suite where they administer the epidurals. By this time I needed to push and was told to push through the contractions when they got my legs in the stirrups. Apart from the breakdown, I had been quiet all through my labour but I screamed when I pushed. I felt myself ripping inside and it brought a whole new meaning to the word 'pain'! A doctor was called in to discuss a c-section as the labour was going so badly. He said to try a ventouse (suction) delivery with the epidural first. My dad had to hold me upright while they administered the epidural through the contractions. I felt like I was sitting directly on my son's head and the pain was extreme.

Finally the epidural kicked in 20 minutes later. I was so badly dehydrated and weak that the midwives put me on a drip of fluids and a hormone drip to speed up dilation. They then left me for 2 hours to rest whilst the hormone drip dilated me the final half a centimeter. On the plus hand, I didn't have the horrible midwife anymore.

When the team came back they prepped for the delivery and then told me to bear down and push when I had contractions. I did this but nothing happened. At first they thought it was because I was too weak to push then after 30 minutes with no progress they confirmed my son was going to be a big baby and he was stuck so I wouldn't be able to push him out. The doctor was called back in to discuss a c-section again as I was begging for one by this time. He checked me over then said the baby was too far down the birth canal to do a c-section and they couldn't risk cutting me open now as it would cut the baby. The doctor then left so the team attached the suction and the woman pulled hard but the suction popped off. They then cut me (episiotomy) 4 times - I will never forget the crunching sound you hear when they cut you. After the 4 cuts the woman then tried a forceps delivery as my son's heartbeat had dropped from 140+ beats right down to below 60 beats. The woman delivering told me he would be out within one contraction but this wasn't the case. They finally pulled him out 45 minutes later at 1.08am and he wasn't breathing. It was 2 minutes before the team got him breathing and he was so ill, his cry was very quiet and very weak. I was trying to look at him but couldn't see very well as they were blocking my view. The woman who delivered him kept snapping her fingers in front of my face and telling me to pay attention to what she was trying to tell me (I was too out of it to realise she was even talking).

He weighed 10lbs 6oz, his head was 36.5cm in diameter and due to that, the extensive labour and assisted delivery, I had a third degree tear even after they had cut me the 4 times (this is what the woman was trying to explain). My sister nearly threw up when she saw me 'down there' and later explained that it looked like I had been cut neatly and then had two people force my legs apart so I ripped from front to backside. I wasn't allowed to hold my son as I had lost so much blood I had to be wheeled for an emergency op to suture the tear. They wrapped him up in a blanket and I had to watch as they walked around me and gave him to my sister for his first cuddle. I get along with my sister but at that moment I hated her more than anyone for taking what I felt should have been mine. I'd never felt so jealous and heartbroken before - I thought my son would think she was his mother rather than me and I would never be able to bond with him. I was so upset about this I cried throughout the whole operation. I was finally wheeled into a private room with my son at 4am to rest and try and bond with him but after the ordeal of labour and the feeling of being so out of control and terrified, I didn't trust myself to do anything with him or hold him. The night staff were awful. They had placed him at the foot of my bed so I couldn't even see him and couldn't move still from the epidural. I called them when he cried as I couldn't move and they chastised me for not getting up to him.

I left the hospital the next night once I had got my sons sugar levels up during the day (his sugar levels were far too low for a baby his size). I could barely walk and I felt horrified by my experience. I cried non-stop, I was too weak to hold him and when I tried to eat a slice of toast the next day, it felt like my stomach had shriveled up completely. I had no post-pregnancy weight, my stomach literally looked like a deflated bag straight after the delivery. I was so ill my dad had to take a week off work to look after both me and my son.

I suffered incontinence for weeks due to the tear and was too humiliated to go out anywhere. Then came the anger at how I was treated, left dehydrated and ignored when I knew something was wrong. I suffer flashbacks and vivid nightmares of being back in that hellish experience and being racked with pain. I always wanted 3 children and now I feel that I could never get pregnant again. I find it extremely hard to be intimate with my partner - my mind does one thing and my body seems to refuse to respond in any way! I am only 20 years old yet I feel as though i'm 60 - I have no sex drive or sex life and the strain is very hard on our relationship.

I spoke to my health visitor and she diagnosed me with PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder) and Anxiety. She was very helpful and called the hospital to book me in to go through my labour notes with a midwife and have them explain to me why the events of my labour happened the way they did. That call was made 6 weeks ago and I still have not had a phone call or any communication from the hospital after being told I would hear from them within 2 days. My HV chased up with the hospital twice and still have not had a response.

Just writing this alone has made me cry and I have never been an emotional person before that experience.

No-one expects labour to be a walk in the park but to feel so weak and be in enough pain to feel as though your actually dying only to be ignored was more than I had ever expected from my first labour experience. If they had just given me the c-section when I asked the first time, the whole ordeal could have been avoided, instead they cared more about their stupid competition than the care of their patients.

I have now filed a claim against them for medical negligence and the case has been accepted by the solicitors. I don't want compensation for what I went through - throwing money at someone will not make the experience go away - I want the experience to be made public and the NHS to admit that they need to have more training for their staff and teach some of their midwives to be more empathetic and caring and get rid of the midwives who are as cruel as mine was.