

Alison's Story

What happened to me

My son was born in May 2005 by emergency caesarean section. Although once delivered he was absolutely fine and healthy, it was the actual labour that was traumatic for me.

My waters broke at 11.30pm on a Sunday night, within 15 minutes my contractions were 3 minutes apart and lasting for 1 minute. The first stage of my delivery progressed well, I dilated 5cm in 3 hours. I had planned to use the birthing pool, but by the time it was ready for me I did not want to get in. I was using the gas and air but found it was not enough.

The contractions got more intense and I felt the need to push and the midwives started encouraging me. After four hours of pushing there was no progress. I was exhausted and still they kept on telling me to push. I kept telling them that something did not feel right and to get a doctor. I felt they ignored my wishes. They just kept telling me to push.

I was shouting at them I could not keep going and that I really wanted some help and that something was not right. Finally they rang a doctor and the response was to keep going another 30 minutes and then she would come down if there was no progress. I was given Pethadin which had no effect.

There was no progress and upon examination by the doctor it was discovered that my son's head was stuck and that it would need to be either caesarean or forceps. I did not care at this stage I just told her to make it all stop. Once in theatre they did another examination and said it would have to be caesarean. I was relieved to hear that they were finally going to do something.

Because I have bad veins for getting lines into I had four contractions just lying on the operating table before they could get the drip in to be able to then do the epidural. Once the epidural was in everything was ok. My husband was there beside me and our little boy was safely delivered at 10.55am on the Monday morning.

What contributed to the trauma

The midwives did not listen to me when I said some thing was wrong. I knew it did not feel right and they ignored me.

Part way though the labour I had a shift change of midwives who came in all fresh and started telling me to push all over again. If they had been there from the start they may not have been so enthusiastic.

The lack of control in the situation.

The effects of the gas and air made it seem like a nightmare. You are not really with it and you feel so out of control. When you call for someone and no-one helps you.

I was physically exhausted. The week before I gave birth I had a really bad sinus infection, cough and cold. I was on antibiotics and had not really been sleeping well. The fact then that I was in labour all through the night made it all so much

worse. My illness was either ignored or not even picked up. Should they not have checked how I was upon admission and then surely should have been taken into account.

Prevention

The midwives should have listened to what I said and should have trusted my judgement that something was wrong.

They should have checked the state of my health upon admission and if they did know I had been ill then they should have taken this into account as to my tiredness. I should not have been made to push for so long.

I should have been examined by a doctor a lot sooner.

Effects of the Trauma

Vivid flashbacks, it is now over 5 months ago and they are just as clear.

Nightmares

Talking and thinking about it makes me very upset. This is the first time I have written about it and it has made me cry.

The thought of getting pregnant again terrifies me. I actually wanted two children but at the moment that is never going to happen. My sex life with my husband has suffered because I am so scared of getting pregnant.

You feel very alone, although my husband is wonderful and I can tell him anything, he cannot possibly understand what it feels like.

I felt I lost out on some crucial bonding time with my baby because I was physically exhausted. I don't remember the rest of the day after the birth. I was in hospital a week, I could not pick my baby up myself, I could not bath him or help him when he cried because of my physical state after the birth. I would have recovered a lot quicker after the caesarean had I not have gone through that length of labour first.

The future

I have a close friend who is a midwife. She is getting the notes from my birth and we are going to meet and go through them to try and help me understand what happened and why. If this does not help enough I will be going to my GP for further help.

I feel quite angry now, I want to ask the midwives who delivered my baby why they did this to me. Why they did not listen and explain what the effects this has had. I hold them responsible for what has happened to me. Maybe my opinion will change once I have talked it through, who knows ?