

My name is Selina, and I am a mum of three beautiful children. My birth trauma story involves not one but two out of three of my children's births.

My first child was born in [REDACTED] after what doctors classed as a high-risk pregnancy but I was never given clear reasons as to why it was classed as such.

During my pregnancy I had some issues with various things such as early pregnancy bleeding and low blood pressure, at times high. Things seemed to be progressing well. However, during the last trimester it was realised my baby seemed small and a growth scan was ordered. It was decided baby was just genetically small and fine., even though she was much smaller than she should be for the gestation she was at.

At a follow up visit some weeks later, the obstetrician asked if a follow growth scan had been performed and why not? I explained the reasons I was given, and she was not happy as my fundal height was not changing as it should and she said a follow-up should always be given and urgently ordered one.

She also expressed concern due to babies' size in the previous growth scan.

During the follow up growth scan it was discovered that not only was my baby much smaller than she should be for her gestation of 39 weeks, but she was also losing weight. There was also an in issues with one of my arteries that was ignored. I was sent to PAC where it was decided I needed to be induced ASAP, which would be the following day. Before they sent me home a midwife said she just wanted to check what my cervix was doing.

However, she performed a stretch and sweep. With no warning, didn't ask, no consent sought from me and therefore none given. I felt so uncomfortable, so violated and like everything was just so out of my control. Not a lot was explained to me at all, about what was happening with my baby, why induction was necessary, what to expect, what my options may be.

I was admitted the following day.

The balloon was inserted but it was so over inflated I dilated to 4 to 5cm and it would not come out without being cut to drain first. I spent the night in extreme discomfort and pain, unable to move even slightly. I was taken through to delivery, where I had a midwife with a student midwife. It was said numerous times that the student my birth in order to get her numbers, meet her target and be qualified. This was mentioned throughout my entire labor and delivery.

My waters were broken, and Pitocin started at a high rate.

So high I had intense, full contractions very quickly, but the CTG machine was not picking them up at all.

Due to an issue with the IV machine requiring it to remain plugged in at all times, I was not allowed to get off the bed and when I needed the toilet, I was told do it very quickly. I could not even move around on the bed to change positions, I was kept on my back which given my baby was posterior, something they didn't check, the pain was so much more intense.

The obstetrician came in at one stage and told them they had me in the worst possible position for laboring and delivery, but they still would not let me move.

When I tried to tell the midwives my contractions were very intense and close together, they didn't believe me. I had to say it more than once.

However, when the student midwife placed her hand upon my belly she could feel the intensity and the closeness of them.

I was refused an epidural by the anesthetist because he didn't said I couldn't have one due to spinal issues. This was not true, I actually can.

I was checked and told I was at 6cm.

Less than 5 minutes later I said I needed to push and there was so much pressure but they said it was impossible and no way.

I insisted but they gave me the same talk, I insisted again. It was the same thing, but I insisted I needed to push, so they checked and sure enough I was at 10cm.

They had me pushing for 40mins with no progress.

I was exhausted and close to passing out. They had a trainee obstetrician come in to try and help things along, she performed an episiotomy, but it was botched. She actually cut me at least two to three times. My mum watched and said they butchered me.

Baby was stuck and not moving.

They continued to have me push but as they finally realised the baby was posterior, they had the main obstetrician come back to check and decide what to do, at that point I was so exhausted I could barely speak, had no real understanding what was happening around me as he said they needed to use forceps to get the baby out. I was not asked, I wasn't told of any risks, just told it needed to happen, and it wouldn't take long, and baby would be there. He had to cut me further but as the local anesthetic failed and I felt absolutely everything from being cut to each side of the forceps being inserted and placed then baby being pulled. I also tore.

I was so completely exhausted and close to passing out, I had no idea baby was out and they had to tell me three times she was on my belly. I couldn't even properly react to finding out the baby was a girl, something I waited the entire pregnancy to find out.

While I was being stitched up I heard the trainee doctor mention rectal prolapse being an issue in time as did my mum, but it was very quickly silenced.

I also heard the senior midwife apologise to the student for not getting her birth.

I was given a hard time by a senior staff member for needing strong pain relief afterwards.

This birth trauma caused a small rectocele, I had trouble sitting, standing and even walking for three months after the birth of my first child.

I had issues with using my bladder that resolved but developed issues with using my bowels.

The fact so many issues were missed and ignored, a medical procedure performed without consent, no risks explained in regard to Pitocin or using forceps, not being allowed to move which may have actually helped in the process of getting baby down through the birth canal.

I was also always very quickly recovered when I needed to get any clothing off my skin due to being so extremely hot and in intense pain, watched the midwives exchange very disturbing looks between them when they saw my body which left me feeling very ashamed.

The whole experience left me feeling extremely violated, ashamed, embarrassed, dismissed, ignored, and played a part in my post-natal depression.

My postnatal depression was severe, but I could not access the help I needed with that.

I was also ignored by my GP at the time.

The Birth of my third child in [REDACTED]

I had some minor complications with this pregnancy.

Midwives also noticed I started showing early signs of pre-eclampsia with swollen puffy legs and feet, protein in my urine, blood pressure going up, but doctors refused to induce every time midwives tried to raise the issues even when they were concerned and could see it was impacting on me. The doctors would not even examine me themselves, even though they were right there in their office, he would not get out of his chair, and it was the same doctor every time.

I also warned them multiple times including the night I had my baby that with each pregnancy that labor got quicker each time (4 hours and under) and both previous babies were posterior, I was sure this one was too, because I had all the exact same sensations and feelings in the exact same places but they ignored it every time.

I had multiple stretch and sweeps, start and stop contractions, over a few weeks.

I made to 40 weeks and 3 days when my water broke.

The doctor in the clinic didn't believe me and insisted she needed to test to make sure I didn't just pee myself. Which was just insulting. It didn't matter that amniotic fluid was still leaking out of me.

Sure, enough she tested and said oh and sent me to PAC, the doctor there wanted to send me home and have me go back for IV antibiotics, just wait it out.

The Midwife who had seen me previously wanted to get me in and started already.

The doctor tried to wait me out hoping I would leave but I wouldn't.

I was admitted hours later, eventually they started Pitocin at the lowest rate first.

However, not allowing me off the bed, they made me stay there on my back.

With the first midwife laughing at my discomfort.

She then turned it from low straight to the highest possible and that is when things started going very wrong. She also did a handover, and I was left alone.

Within minutes of turning the pitocin up, my contractions were extremely intense, I became very dizzy and almost passed out. Another midwife came in and monitored me for a very short bit, noticed I started to pass out, then I had the most intense contractions and my body started involuntary pushing, however I wasn't very dilated, only around 4 to 5cm, they spoke about getting me an epidural and were trying to get an anesthetist but the only one there was in doing a c section, they realised my contractions were coupling but one after the other almost no break in between them at all, my involuntary pushing was getting stronger but they refused to turn the Pitocin down without an epidural, they then noticed baby was going into distress, they checked and I still wasn't dilated any further.

Babies' heartrate dropped more, they decided to attach a probe but in the time of trying to attach a probe, I went from 5 to 10 cm in less than 5 mins, and they realised baby had flatlined. They went into full emergency.

They needed to get him out but there was no anesthetist for an emergency c section, so the doctor used the cup.

While attaching the cup he was very nastily yelling at me to stop crying out and stop pushing, which shocked even the midwife. However, I was in the worst pain I had ever been in in my life, and I had no control over the involuntary pushing, my body was doing it all by itself. No local anesthetic was given, no pain relief, nothing was explained, no consent sought, it was just done.

He then yanked so hard a few times he was pulling my pelvic floor each time and when he finally yanked my baby out and there is no other word to describe it, he yanked my entire pelvic floor with him and almost dropped my baby in the process, only just catching him in time. The baby had been stuck in the posterior position.

I suffered tearing, a significant rectocele, cystocele and enterocele in the process.

My very grey, unbreathing baby was placed on me for a few seconds before they took him to work on him. I saw him briefly before they took him to NICU.

I was then left alone for hours. When I tried to shower I was shaking so much that I struggled to stand and even dress myself, a midwife who came to check on me helped to get me dried off and dressed.

She then arranged for me to visit my baby boy in NICU. Insisted that I be able to see him and stay for at least a short bit.

I learned during the early hours of the morning he had a pneumothorax.

During my stay, I found I was treated poorly and left on my own the vast majority of the time, the urge to just get me out the door and discharged was more important than my physical and mental wellbeing. During my first breastfeed while visiting my son in NICU which was later on the first day that I was able to hold him (3 days) they packed up my room and belongings telling the ward clerk I had left, this was even after the ward clerk telling them I was still in the hospital I was just in NICU visiting with my baby, and why would my belongings still be there. The staff were just gobsmacked and tried to arrange for me to sleep in a recliner next to my bub in NICU but due to my birth injuries sitting was so, so painful.

I was again left feeling violated, shaken, embarrassed, ashamed, anxious, scared, with very little trust in doctors. With poor body image.

I was left unable to use my bowels properly, pass wind in a normal way, digestive issues, bladder issues, pelvic floor dysfunction. Pain, discomfort.

My birth injuries were such that they were ignored for three years before even one thing was addressed or taken seriously.

I had surgery for the rectocele.

I had surgery just over a year ago for a bladder sling.

I am still waiting to see a colorectal surgeon to address the enterocele and my physio is almost certain my upper intestines have prolapsed. I have been waiting almost 7 years for things to be addressed and its exhausting feeling like this, when you would really just like to feel somewhat normal and go to the toilet like a normal person, but you can't access the health care needed to fix what a medical professional broke.

My little boy has sleep issues and has done so since he was a baby.

It was so severe when he was a baby and impacted my mental health so badly, but I could not get the help we needed.

He struggles to regulate.

We have forever struggled with accessing any help for him from pediatricians to CHAPS or any service as they are just not available.

At no point were there ever any explanations of risks associated with induction, use of pitocin, forceps or ventouse cup.

There is a massive lack of communication between staff, particularly when in clinic, notes were not always updated either which increases the risk to both mother and baby.

Consent is not sought when it absolutely should be.

Women are not respected for knowing their own bodies, particularly with previous pregnancies. We are not always respected and are often treated as less. We should not be experiencing this kind of trauma or these kinds of injuries and then waiting years if ever to try and have them repaired.

Our babies should not be impacted by such trauma, and we should be able to access help for them right through their younger years.

One thing I would also like to share is in [REDACTED] I suffered a missed miscarriage.

During that time while I was waiting for surgery to have a D & C I was becoming increasingly unwell as the time between finding out about the loss and the surgery date was 2 to 3 weeks.

I became so increasingly unwell, that it turned out I developed an infection, and I was sent to the ED to have urgent surgery.

I waited 24 hours. I was treated very poorly. I was refused needed pain relief for hours eventually being given only a Panadol, despite sitting there for hours shivering, it wasn't until early hours in the morning I was given a blanket.

The doctor who did my consent forms accused me of just wanting to skip the queue and get my surgery quicker, even laughing at me and repeating it. Said a number of not nice things.

I was eventually moved to the transition lounge where I was eventually taken for surgery in the afternoon just before 2pm.

I woke up in recovery after 4pm. Turned out I was actually septic.

I just hadn't presented in the typical way with a high fever.

I required IV antibiotics followed almost a month of oral antibiotics, and when I was told about being septic all I could hear was the doctors' words accusing me of wanting to skip the queue. If I hadn't been sent there by my GP, I hate to think what could have happened in waiting that extra week or so.

Women just are treated poorly in so many ways when it comes to health and any aspect of it, and it needs to change.

Thank you for taking the time to read my story.

