

From the beginning my pregnancy was awful, there was zero support throughout which led to me being in rooms with people who just wanted to get their job finished but didn't care about the patient in front of them.

I had Hyperemesis Gravidarum, which I discovered myself reading one of my referral letters. No one told me or explained what that would mean. I lost 16kg due to inability to eat and had to stop working at 10 weeks.

I was put in to the doctors program because of my BMI, I wouldn't find out that was why until I was 35 weeks pregnant and asking if I was going to see a midwife at all before I had my child.

Each appointment was the same. They would ask how I'm feeling, take my blood pressure, measure my fundal height and accost me about my refusal to take the covid vaccination. Comments from the doctors like "why not, are you scared of needles?" and constantly being pressured at every appointment despite making it clear I would not take it. I was suffering panic attacks and was extremely depressed. I had a referral written to perinatal psychologist. That referral got lost and it wasn't until around 26 weeks that I called to find out what was happening. When I finally did get a chance to speak to someone it was to screen me. They decided that because I wasn't suicidal and it was my preference to avoid medication that I didn't qualify for support.

At around the 20 weeks I saw the doctor and told her I'd done some research myself and realised that my prenatal supplement was making me feel more unwell so I stopped taking it. She responded by saying "yeah that's usually something we recommend" but no one told me. I was left to my own devices to figure everything out on my own. Around 28 weeks I had a phone appointment and it happened to be a midwife. She was incredibly helpful and support. She commented that she didn't understand why I was in the doctors program and would do what she could to have me transferred to one of the midwife programs as I requested when I found out I was pregnant. Another month went by and I was back seeing a doctor. After that appointment I called and asked what was happening, that it seemed like I was deliberately put in to this program. The person I spoke to confirmed that I was deliberately put in to that program and it was due to my BMI. BMI has been disproven many times and the fact it's stills used to determine someone's health is frankly disgusting.

I complained and I was moved to the "satellite midwifery program" I was 35 weeks before I spoke to a midwife. The woman I was sent to didn't even work on the ward anymore. She had been a midwife for a very long time so was very stuck in her thinking. I told her how it was my preference to avoid induction and I wanted as little intervention as possible, I trust my body and I wanted it and my baby to be given every opportunity to do its thing. She responded by telling me I should have organised a home birth. She then brought the vaccine conversation back up, not just Covid but the flu. Neither of which I wanted and I had made clear time and time again. She wouldn't take no for an answer and kept telling me stories and how dangerous it is and pushing me. I left that appointment anxious and feeling unsure.

At 41 weeks 4 days I agree to an ultrasound to make sure baby was still happy. They determined my amniotic fluid was low and that it would be dangerous to allow me to go any further. They wanted me in the next day for induction at 2pm. Of course I was scared and agreed.

I was thrilled that night when I went in to spontaneous labour at 4am. I called and told them, I'm booked for an induction but I've gone into spontaneous labour and can I stay home. They said come in for assessment.

I sat in the pregnancy assessment ward for 7.5 hours waiting for someone to assess me as to if I could go home to labour. My partner wasn't allowed in because of Covid protocols so I was alone, no food, no water. My labour stalled.

At 9.30 that night I went to the desk, I said I want to go home. There happened to be a doctor there and he simply said, "you can't, it's not safe. We'll admit you to the ward now" without talking to me. Of course being told it was dangerous scared me. He told me he was going to take blood and put a cannula in, without telling me that's what he was doing and that I want to avoid a cannula, so I felt quick shocked and upset by that.

The next morning they began induction methods with the hormone strip as my labour struggled to regain its strength. I was tired, I had very little sleep.

During the day a midwife came in during shift change. I explained to her that while I agreed to the induction I didn't really want it and wanted to prolong it as long as I could to give my baby the chance to come on her own. She grumpily asked me what I thought I was there for. She then said to me and partner "the risk of still birth doubles after 42 weeks" which I responded to her with "well what are the statistics?" and she very quickly backtracked, telling us she didn't know the exact numbers. But I did.

That night I hadn't dilated enough and they decided to do a balloon. The balloon was there for an hour before my water broke. It was 10pm, I didn't get any sleep that night either. I was told they would find a birth suite for me and when one was available they would move me over. It wasn't until 6am that they had enough staff to take me to the birthing suite.

There was meconium in my water but baby's heart never skipped a beat, she was great the whole way through. I pleaded with the midwife to let me get in the bath but she told me I couldn't and she wasn't comfortable with it. I spent the day in the shower. It was 3pm before anyone realised I hadn't eaten and I got cheese and crackers because that's all that was available.

It was 74 from when I started spontaneous labour to having my baby at 8pm. When she was born I heard someone ask my partner to cut the cord, I protested that I wanted it to be delayed to allow optimal cord clamping. They said they'd left it for a minute and baby needed to be checked because of the meconium. Something I know they can do on my chest but I had no energy left to fight them. I began to haemorrhage and I believe strongly that the stress and exhaustion contributed greatly to that. It stopped itself before needing surgery.

The nurses hadn't stored my colostrum properly so when it came time to feeding my very sleepy baby it was no good and had to be thrown out. The midwife that came in right after I'd given birth was harsh and rude. She was trying to force my daughter to my breast and was saying "come on I'm not going to do it for you" while speaking to my newborn.

My partner was then told after 4 hours he would have to leave. It was midnight, he had no vehicle and family were all in bed. We asked them to let him stay and they did until 6pm after which he was sent home and wasn't allowed to return. I endured so much over those 3 days and then I was stuffed in to a hospital room without my support. He had been with me every moment from when I was admitted.

It only continued when we finally got home and my baby had started losing weight. My milk was delayed and as it turned out, of all the people that saw my daughter and watched her feed, every one of them missed the fact she had quite a severe tongue tie. I found it after seeing an osteopath for something unrelated some weeks later. We never got to exclusive breastfeeding because of that.

The whole process, every step, I was let down. I remember calling the hospital one day during my pregnancy because I had a migraine for 5 days straight and couldn't eat or drink anything, I clearly needed fluid. I was told to try icy poles or ginger beer.

My daughter was born with an unexplained medical condition which what what caused the low amniotic fluid and honestly the whole process has been worse than her birth. I've been gaslight multiple times, had surgery booked for her by doctors immediately after I've told them we don't want them, we've been told this is "just how she was born" when asking for referrals to other specialists while trying to figure out why this is happening to her.

We've been sent away to "wait and see" and had to present to the ER at least a dozen times where no one understands what we're dealing with because there is no one in charge of her care and any fever we have to assume is an infection since shes had 7 unfections in 14 months that required IV antibiotics. I've had a triage nurse refuse to treat her (an official complaint was made). We had 2 sessions of 90 minutes holding our daughter down while they try to cannulate her and we understand there's obviously some sort of reason it's difficult but have since learned how that in incredibly stressful.

We present most recently to the ER after concern that her surgery site was closing over (it needed to stay open) and had developed a nasty rash. We were back in the ER 8 days later after no one took my concern seriously. The doctor told me that she could see on the file we had presented for a rash the week before. Our daughter ended up requiring another surgery and has really struggled to recover.

We have had so many negative experiences and so frequently that I just don't have the energy to explain them all right here. We applied for disability because our daughter cannot go to daycare but she is "too young to answer half the questions so doesn't meet the criteria." I had my own business but had to keep cancelling because of the frequent and lengthy hospital stays.

My partner and I have been given no support and no answers. I'm currently chasing private referrals because the focus has only been on symptom managing and hoping she grows out of it. The current plans has her with a gash in her abdomen to empty her bladder constantly and still waiting to see if she might just "grow out of it."

I'm writing this submission at the 11th hour because we are 9 days post surgery and she's constantly been in pain, we have a 5 month old as well and we've all had a cold this week. We're run down, borrowing money from family to buy groceries this week and so completely exhausted by a system that has beaten us down. 3 days ago we had a concern with her surgery site and the thought of taking her to the ER was paralysing because we don't trust them anymore. Upon trying to call the outpatient clinic I was told "no ones here this afternoon and there isn't really anyone around tomorrow either." I was told to present to the ER. It's a horrible place to be and something needs to change.