

I do not know if this counts as sexual assault, but it certainly felt like sexual assault to me, rape even, especially since it involved somebody penetrating my genitals without even attempting to get consent, and against my explicit refusal. The Maternity Consumer Network & Maternity Choices Australia also encouraged any woman who felt they had been sexually assaulted/raped by their provider during birth to do a submission, so here goes.

It's necessary for me to first give a little background information. This occurred during the birth of my son [REDACTED]. While I was pushing, a nurse came in and informed the obstetrician that another woman was pushing too, so the obstetrician was in a big rush. Within minutes of my son being born, and without a word to me, the obstetrician began tugging on the umbilical cord to try to get the placenta to come out. Normally, they have the woman give a few pushes and wait up to 30 minutes for the placenta to come out on its own. But the obstetrician was in a hurry and didn't want to wait. Because the obstetrician was tugging hard on the cord to get the placenta come out before it was ready to detach, the cord snapped and tore my placenta in half and I began bleeding, although "only moderately" according to my medical records.

What comes next is the part in consider sexual assault/rape. Again, without a single word to me, the obstetrician inserts her arm up to the elbow, into my vagina and uterus and begins scraping the placenta out with her fingers. This is called a manual removal of the placenta. It is supposed to be done in theatre under general anesthesia, or in a true emergency (but remember I was only bleeding "moderately" according to my medical records), at least with additional pain relief. But I was given none - once again I believe, due to the obstetrician being in a hurry. And as stated before, it was done without notification or even attempting to get my consent. I was begging, repeatedly asking, "What's going on? What's happening?" But nobody would answer me – not the obstetrician, nor the two nurses assisting her. After a little while, I guess they got the placenta out and got the bleeding under control, because things seemed to calm down a bit. But then I overheard (because once again she never spoke directly to me) the obstetrician say to one of the nurses that she was going to give me Cytotec/Misoprostol rectally for the bleeding. I immediately said, "No! No! I don't want that!" I said it twice. It's because I'm a sexual assault survivor and have serious issues around that area of my body. But she told me, "You have to have it." And she inserted it rectally against my explicit refusal.

I absolutely did not have to have the Cytotec/Misoprostol rectally. It can be given sublingually, which actually works better than rectally. Or I could have been given Hemabate or Methergine by IV or IM injection. And give the chance, I would have gladly chosen any or all of those.

The law states that even in an emergency, unless the patient is unconscious or incapacitated, of which I was neither, the patient has the right to refuse any and all treatment. To do otherwise is assault & battery. And since this involved my genitals, without even attempting to get consent or inform me of what was happening, and against my explicit refusal, I consider it sexual assault/rape.

I have also been diagnosed with PTSD by a licensed counsellor, and even two years after my son's birth, I still suffer the same symptoms as a person who has been sexual assaulted/raped (anxiety, depression, flashbacks, nightmares, suicidal ideation, etc.).