

News

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'Doctors ignored my cries'

Mother's nightmare at Johannesburg's Charlotte Maxeke Academic Hospital ended when the daughter she was going to call Mercy died soon after birth.

KHETHIWE CHELEMU

JESSICA Mushumba's nightmare at Johannesburg's Charlotte Maxeke Academic Hospital ended when the daughter she was going to call Mercy died soon after birth.

Mushumba, 38, arrived at the hospital in pain shortly after 9am on Thursday May 13. She claims a doctor on duty attached a foetal heart rate monitor to her, told her the baby was in distress, and then had her rushed to the operating theatre for an emergency Caesarean section.

But when she got there, she claims she had to wait nine hours for the procedure — all the while lying sobbing in pain, with nurses telling her she had to wait in the queue because she had not made an appointment.

Three weeks ago, Health Minister Aaron Motsoaledi said an increasing number of South Africa's babies were dying due to poor healthcare. "The infant mortality rate in our country is very high. Only 10 countries have seen an increase in the infant mortality rate and South Africa is one of them," he said at the release of the Human Sciences Research Council's Health of Our Children report.

Mushumba's baby died in the same hospital where six babies in the neo-natal intensive care unit died last week of diarrhoea caused by the killer bug klebsiella found in their bottles — which had not been properly sterilised.

"The doctor at the operating theatre told me I was not in labour," she said, adding that she was told to wait because there were two patients ahead of her and she had not made an appointment.

"They said I should wait for another six hours to see if they could operate on me."

Mushumba, who lives in Malvern, eastern Johannesburg, said: "I was in labour, the baby was pushing and I was crying but nothing was done."

When she was finally wheeled into theatre at 6.30pm, Mushumba said that she was exhausted and couldn't feel her baby moving.

"When my baby came out, she cried. I told them I wanted to see the baby and they gave her to me. I then heard someone saying that the baby needed to be rushed to the intensive care unit," she said.

The next morning at 7am, she went to the unit and asked to see her child but found her on oxygen.


She claims the doctor on duty ignored her. "Another doctor came in, she was nice to me and explained that ... the baby was tired when she was delivered."

Her baby died on Saturday morning. "They said her lungs were not opening and that she could not breathe on her own," she said.

Mushumba insists her baby could have lived if she had received proper care.

Gauteng health spokesman Mandla Sidu said: "I cannot give you a response today because I have to get the hospital's file and also phone the hospital to verify her information."



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