

# Mother loses baby after 5-hour wait

CATHY O'LEARY MEDICAL EDITOR, The West Australian March 25, 2011, 3:00 am



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A young Sudanese woman claims that she was left in a Perth public hospital waiting area for five hours before being admitted to its birthing suites, only to be told her unborn baby which had been alive earlier had died.

An African women's support group called for a full investigation yesterday, claiming staff at Osborne Park Hospital failed to properly monitor the heavily pregnant woman, despite her waters breaking, and had ignored her because she was calm.

Lilli Otoresno, 21, said she went to the hospital with her two-year-old son about noon on Tuesday, after her waters broke on the way to a routine antenatal appointment.

She said a doctor examined her and checked the baby's movement and said there were no problems.

She was then left in a waiting area because she was told the birthing suites were full.

Ms Otoresno said she was not taken to the delivery area until about 5pm, when medical staff told her the baby, a girl, was dead. She was later induced and delivered the baby early on Wednesday morning.

Dr Casta Tungaraza, president of the African Women's Council of Australia and Murdoch University's equal opportunity and social justice manager, said she was appalled that a pregnant woman whose waters had broken would be left for hours before being taken through to the delivery area.

"African women don't show a lot of signs when they are distressed," she said.

"They remain very calm, and you have to wonder if she was Caucasian with white skin whether staff would have been better able to see signs of distress and respond.

"When she arrived at the hospital the baby was fine, but hours later when she was finally taken through to the delivery area the baby was dead. You might expect this in Africa, but not in Australia."

Dr Tungaraza said the baby had been named Gloria because her mother, who came to Australia at the age of 14, could not bring herself to give her the African name she had picked out.

A spokeswoman for the North Metropolitan Area Health Service said the matter was now being investigated.

"We express our condolences to the family for their loss," she said. "Due to patient confidentiality we cannot comment on specific patient details at this time."