

SUMMER 2008



YourCare

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Making Miracles Crouse Leads Region in Neonatal Care

INSIDE



5 SUMMER SAFETY FOR KIDS



6 COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY IMPROVES PATIENT CARE



9 IS IT TIME FOR A COLONOSCOPY?

Crouse Turnaround Highlighted Nationally



Crouse Hospital's financial and operational turnaround and, in particular, its cultural transformation over the past several years, was the focus of a cover story in a recent issue of *Workforce Management* magazine, a national publication that focuses on workplace issues and trends. The nine-page article featured interviews with a number of Crouse staff members, including Chief Quality Officer Derrick Suehs (pictured on the cover).

The article gives readers an inside look at what the hospital has done to engage its workforce, re-capture market share and improve the overall experience for employees, patients and physicians. "By staying focused on our mission, vision and values, we are seeing positive results, which is what attracted the magazine to our story," says Suehs. The article can be viewed at crouse.org (in the News Highlights section).

OUR MISSION

To provide the best in patient care and to promote community health.



IMPROVING NEONATAL CARE

Making Miracles

On May 11, 2008, Anayah Marie Marrero was the tiniest patient at Crouse Hospital. Born that day, 15 weeks premature, she weighed 495 grams—just one pound.

Advised of their daughter's fragile condition, Rosanna Smith and Ivan Marrero knew luck was on her side in one important respect: Anayah was being cared for in the most technologically advanced facility in the region by the most skilled and experienced physicians and nurses.

Crouse Hospital's Baker Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) is a state-designated Level 4 regional referral center serving a 15-county area for high-risk pregnancies. Twenty hospitals, from Watertown to the north and Binghamton to the south, stretching west near Rochester and east past Utica, send women whose pregnancies are high-risk to deliver at Crouse so their babies will receive the specialized care they require—in utero and immediately upon birth.

"We live in Susquehanna, (Pennsylvania, just across New York's southern border)," said Smith. "I went to the hospital in Binghamton, but they sent me to Crouse to have my baby because she was so early." One third of NICU patients are transported by Crouse's highly skilled transport team from outlying hospitals via a specially equipped transport ambulance or New York State Police Medevac helicopter.

"I was very nervous at first, but everyone here has given us hope."

—ROSANNA SMITH

Tops in Technology

More than 3,800 babies are born each year at Crouse. Of the 900 babies cared for in the NICU annually, half are premature (37 weeks gestation or less), with the other half having birth defects, breathing difficulties or cardiac problems, or those recovering from neonatal surgery.

Delicate babies require tough technological tools to survive. Due to enhancements in NICU technology, a premie as early as 24 weeks now has a very good chance of surviving. According to Penny Fuller, RN, clinical nurse specialist in the NICU, the many advances embraced by Crouse help the tiniest, sickest babies.

One of the major challenges of a premature newborn is an under-developed heart and lungs. "A major technological development has been the oscillator," cites Fuller, "which opens

Melissa Warner, of Auburn, "kangaroos" daughter Gabriella, just 1 pound 10 ounces.



very tiny lungs up to their fullest capacity for the best gas air exchange possible.” The advent of Surfactant, a protein pumped into the lungs to make them more elastic, also aids in the ventilation of premature lungs.

Tiny babies have extremely thin skin, says Fuller, and another technological advance, humidification to the isolettes where neonates are maintained, has been instrumental in keeping them alive. “Humidity helps a baby preserve body fluids and prevents weight loss.”

Another dramatic life-saving tool is Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation, ECMO for short. Crouse is the only hospital in the region that provides this procedure, the closest other being in Buffalo. ECMO, a form of heart-lung bypass, is used when an infant’s lungs do not respond to conventional therapy.

Soothing Sounds and Snuggles

When you walk into the NICU, machines are everywhere. Yet all the technology in the world can’t replace the soothing sound of a mother’s voice. “It’s amazing to see these tiny babies respond,” says Lisa Rock, RN. “Each one has his or her own personality already, and they really can distinguish their mother’s voice from any other.”

Human contact is critical to a preemie’s development, as shown through many studies of a technique called “Kangaroo Care.” First used in Bogota, Columbia, kangarooing consists of placing a diaper clad premature baby in an upright position on a parent’s bare chest—tummy to tummy, in between the breasts. The baby’s head is turned so that the ear is above the parent’s heart. Infants who experience such care sleep more deeply, maintain consistent body temperature and gain weight faster.

Happy Endings

Dr. Steven Gross, medical director of the NICU, has seen many success stories in his long career as a neonatologist. A regional study during 2005 and 2006 of all live-born infants at 30 weeks gestation or less compared results to a same study conducted 20 years ago. According to Dr. Gross, there has been a significant increase in premature births with a greater percentage surviving without neurodevelopmental impairment at 15 months. The reason: technology. Elliott White of Central Square couldn’t have survived without it. Born August 6, 2005, he arrived 15 weeks early and weighed in at 1 pound 6 ounces. After 80 days in the NICU, Elliott came home with oxygen until his lungs developed further. This summer the rambunctious toddler will turn three, joining the ranks of thousands of other miracles made by the NICU at Crouse Hospital.

On the cover: Mom Rosanna Smith (left) with daughter Anayah and Lisa Rock, RN, in Crouse’s Baker Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.



NICU graduate Elliott White plays with older sister, Cheyenne.

Neonatal Transport Team Selected for Canton-Potsdam Hospital Community Service Award

The Canton-Potsdam Hospital Board of Directors’ Community Service Award has been presented to Crouse Hospital’s Baker Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) Transport Team. The award recognizes exceptional service to Canton-Potsdam Hospital and the community.

“Crouse’s Neonatal Transport Team was selected overwhelmingly by the directors because of their service, compassion and selflessness,” stated Board Chair Edward Mucenski.

When a baby delivered at CPH requires neonatal intensive care, a call is put into Crouse’s NICU in Syracuse. A transport team, consisting of a specially trained RN or nurse practitioner, a neonatal respiratory therapist, attendants and a driver is immediately dispatched. “Sometimes the team arrives in their specially equipped ambulance and sometimes they come by helicopter, but they always come,” said Mucenski. The team travels day or night, regardless of weather, to transport the community’s youngest and most fragile citizens 150 miles to Crouse’s Level 4 NICU, the state designated regional referral center for the highest level of infant care.



Crouse Hospital Neonatal Intensive Care Unit Transport Team members Janet Rasbeck, RN, (left) and Lynn Givas, RN, receive the Canton-Potsdam Hospital Community Service Award from Board Chair Edward Mucenski.