

News Release

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\$500,000 Gift To Bridgeport Hospital Foundation Will Help Address Postpartum Health Risks For Mothers, Babies

BRIDGEPORT, CT (Sept. 9, 2019) – The Bridgeport Hospital Foundation has received a \$500,000 gift from the Allison Family of Westport to support the hospital’s new Postnatal Wellness Check Program. The funds will provide services to mothers of newborns with early screening and education after childbirth.

“We are grateful to the Allison Family for its ongoing generosity in support of infant and maternal health,” said Harold Sauer, MD, chair of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Bridgeport Hospital. “This gift builds on their extraordinary contribution to help modernize our Neonatal Intensive Care Unit in 2016. It will help us reach out to many mothers and babies in the area who will benefit from early postpartum health intervention and support.”

The Postnatal Wellness Check was one of the initiatives discussed by Robert Stiller, MD, Bridgeport Hospital’s chief of maternal-Fetal Medicine, during a Sept. 5 “Bridgeport for Babies Day” news conference at Kolbe Early Care and Learning Center. The event was organized by the Bridgeport Department of Health and Social Services and Bridgeport Prospers, a member agency of the United Way of Coastal Fairfield County, to promote the importance of maternal and early childhood health.

“Traditionally, women may deliver their baby, go home from hospital in two to four days and not see their obstetricians or midwives for another six weeks,” Dr. Stiller said. “Yet, problems may arise prior to that six-week visit. Our ability to recognize complications early and offer treatment options is crucial to improve the health outcomes for new mothers.”

The Postnatal Wellness Check involves a check-up in the Bridgeport Hospital Women’s Care Center, where mothers will undergo examinations for behavioral and physical health issues,

such as pain and infection, hypertension, heart problems, blood clots, anxiety and depression. Based on the results of the exams, mothers will be referred to the appropriate providers for monitoring and follow-up care.

The new program was developed in response to new American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology guidelines and the identified need in the community. The guidelines state that “to optimize the health of women and infants, postpartum care should be an ongoing process rather than a single encounter, with services tailored to support each woman’s individual needs.”

Objectives of the program are two-fold:

- Mothers are scheduled to return to the hospital 7-10 days post-discharge for a follow-up visit with a registered nurse/board certified lactation consultant under the guidance and oversight of an obstetric advanced practice nurse. Transportation will be provided if the mother and infant do not have the means to get to the appointment on their own.
- The mother and/or infant will be connected to a support network of services needed to address medical and social issues that identified at their follow-up visit.

According to a the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, over 700 women in the United States die every year from pregnancy and childbirth-related causes and more than 50,000 suffer life-threatening complications. The CDC also says more than half of maternal deaths occur after babies are born and Black mothers are at higher risk for complications and have higher rates of postpartum depression but are less likely to receive treatment.

Multiple research studies find that women who have early contact with health professionals after delivery are less likely to be depressed and their babies are less likely to be admitted to the hospital, especially for emergency care.

Bridgeport Hospital, part of Yale New Haven Health, is a non-profit 501-bed acute care hospital with two campuses (plus 42 beds licensed to Yale New Haven Children’s Hospital). Both Bridgeport Hospital and the Milford Campus of Bridgeport Hospital serve patients throughout Fairfield and New Haven counties. The hospital admits more than 23,000 patients and provides nearly 350,000 outpatient treatments annually. The Connecticut Burn Center at Bridgeport Hospital is the only burn center in the state and one of only 64 verified burn centers in the United States. Bridgeport Hospital is committed to providing safe, compassionate and cost efficient care its patients and the community. www.bridgeporthospital.org

Photo caption: (l-r) Michael Ivy, MD, Bridgeport Hospital interim president and CEO; Simin Allison, whose family provided the major gift to support the Postnatal Wellness Check program; Steve Jakab, Bridgeport Hospital Foundation president; Susan Chudwick, Foundation director of development; Robert Stiller, MD, hospital chief of Maternal-Fetal Medicine; and Mary Christoffersen, RN, hospital vice president of Nursing.