

Brave Beginnings Grant Assists Neonatal Research

In this feature, Neonatal Intensive Care interviews clinicians and healthcare providers about the actual application of specific products and therapies. This interview is with Dr Anup Katheria, a neonatologist affiliated with the Sharp Healthcare Foundation in San Diego, CA, about the facility receiving a Brave Beginnings grant.

Neonatal Intensive Care: Could you provide a quick history about your hospital and the area it serves?

Dr Anup Katheria: As San Diego, California's only specialty hospital for women and newborns, Sharp Mary Birch Hospital for Women & Newborns is nationally recognized for its quality of care. We operate a 206-bed tertiary-level women's specialty hospital with an 84-bed Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), a 14-bed women's acute care unit, and a 36-bed perinatal specialty care unit. Sharp Mary Birch is the largest delivery service in California and sixth largest in the nation with over 9,400 deliveries annually. We provide medical, educational, and psychosocial services to promote healthy outcomes at birth to nearly 12,000 women and infants from across Southern California. Sharp Mary Birch serves the increasingly diverse population of San Diego, Riverside, and Imperial counties, many of whom confront disparities in health care by race, ethnicity, and language. Of all babies born at Sharp Mary Birch, approximately 39% are Caucasian, 35% are Hispanic, 16% are Asian, 5% are African American, and 5% are unknown/other. Approximately one-third of NICU newborns are covered by Medi-Cal (CA Medicaid). We provide culturally and linguistically appropriate care to our distinct communities including Hispanic, Somali, East African (Sudanese), Chaldean, Vietnamese, Filipino, and Korean populations. About 60% of women served by the hospital are Women, Infant and Children (WIC) Program eligible participants.

A Hospital Honoring Two Visionaries

Sharp Mary Birch Hospital for Women & Newborns bears the names of two extraordinarily generous families. While Sharp was named by a father in a memorial tribute to his son, our women's hospital was named in honor of Mary Birch, a mother who raised two children during the early 1900's. Though born decades apart, Mary Birch and Donald N Sharp had one thing in common — family members who shared the belief that providing for the health of our community was the greatest gift they could bestow.

NIC: Does your hospital/NICU have any accolades you could share with us?

AK: In California, we deliver more babies than any other hospital; we are the 6th largest delivering hospital in the nation.

We have the largest Level III NICU in Southern California with

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84 beds and over 1,600 newborns per year receive advance care in the unit. More than 150 newborns are transferred to us from other hospitals.

Earlier this year, the US Department of Health and Human Services Agency, National Institutes of Health (NIH) awarded the Neonatal Research Institute (NRI) at Sharp Mary Birch a prestigious \$2.9 million award to extend research on umbilical cord milking and delayed cord clamping, which was funded with two prior NIH grants. The cord milking technique has been shown to provide additional cord blood to babies at birth and improve heart, lung and brain function, particularly for premature newborns. The new, larger study aims to show reductions in brain bleeds and improved long-term neurological outcomes in premature babies. Sharp Mary Birch will lead eight other centers participating in this study, which is the largest and most comprehensive of its kind. It is the first private hospital to lead a multicenter international trial. Researchers will follow 1,500 children up to the age of two to analyze the outcomes resulting from using the cord blood milking and delayed clamping methods. If these results are positive, it could improve how preterm babies are cared for worldwide.

We have received the International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) Care Award for employing board-certified lactation consultants and providing educational programs and processes that support patients and their breastfeeding needs.

The hospital is part of Sharp HealthCare, the largest integrated not-for-profit health care delivery system in San Diego County and recipient of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, the nation's highest honor for organizational performance excellence.

In July 2013, Sharp Mary Birch was recognized as a Minimally Invasive Center of Excellence Center for Gynecologic Surgery; the first of its kind in San Diego.

In 2011, we were recognized for our "Outstanding Patient Experience Award" which recognizes hospitals that scored in the top 10% nationally in the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems patient survey database.

In 2009, we received a "Best Place to Practice" award from Press Ganey, a leading national health care consulting group that partners with more than 10,000 hospitals.

We are one of 13 members of the Council of Women's and Infants' Specialty Hospitals (CWISH), a prestigious, invitation-only organization of nonprofit leading hospitals in providing services to women and infants.

Our hospital was named in Fit Pregnancy magazine as one of the "10 best hospitals in America to have a baby."

NIC: How has the equipment purchased with the (help of) Brave Beginnings grant impacted your NICU/Hospital?

AK: The generously provided LifeStart equipment has been integral to a number of our recent neonatal research studies. Because of this critically important equipment, our newborns receive placental blood while they also receive resuscitation. Studies have shown that newborns that need resuscitation have poorer outcomes compared to healthy newborns. However, prior to the development of the LifeStart equipment, it was impossible to allow newborns to receive placental blood since they had to be disconnected from the placenta to be moved to an adjacent space for resuscitation. This vital equipment has allowed us to positively impact the lives of many of the most vulnerable newborns born at Sharp Mary Birch.

NIC: Explain how this equipment provided a better level of care for your neonate patients.

AK: On average, a baby is born every hour at Sharp Mary Birch. Resuscitation systems such as provided on the LifeStart bed, dramatically improve the level of care for our neonatal patients and their families. The bed, when placed together with our current resuscitator and adjacent to the mother for both cesarean and vaginal births, allows the newborn to receive immediate resuscitation without being separated from the mother and placenta. This connection promotes both mother/baby bonding and permits continued blood perfusion to the infant.

NIC: What does your NICU hospital do to stay current with research and best neonate practices?

AK: Our hospital prides itself on creating new and best practices for others to follow and emulate. We have provided evidence for a number of delivery room interventions such as the use of an electrocardiogram during resuscitation, umbilical cord milking and now resuscitation with an intact cord.

NIC: Was the Brave Beginnings grant able to ease any financial burdens pertaining to the purchasing of equipment? Explain how.

AK: We are so grateful to Brave Beginnings for the wonderful grant that allowed our NICU to purchase a new LifeStart bed. Without this important funding, purchase of this bed would not be possible this fiscal year. As a not-for-profit health system and hospital, Sharp HealthCare and Sharp Mary Birch Hospital for Women & Newborns depend upon the generosity of grantors, individuals and donors to help support these critical needs.

NIC: Is there a NICU success story that stands out in your mind that you could tell us about?

AK: We would be honored to share the success story of Leona:

Leona's Story

"When we were given the choice to participate in the research study, we really didn't think twice. Our only question was, how will this affect our baby? We quickly prayed, gave it to God then gave our consent. I can't imagine if Leona didn't receive the stem cells and blood that day. Her brain bleeds may have been much

worse, or her fragile lungs may not have been able to finally rebound and begin to heal. What Dr. Katheria and all the amazing staff at Sharp Mary Birch are continually doing makes me so happy and grateful." — Heidi B., Leona's Mom.

For more of Leona's story, please see the following video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=adeTfKXrazs>