

Oakland hospitals serve women's needs

*Special clinics
now in place for
births, cancer,
OB/GYN*

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In the rapidly evolving landscape of the health care industry, women's medical services have arisen as a specialty and a competitive service venue.

While social forces have caused some of the adjustments, Oakland County hospitals mimic nationwide trends, in which economics is the driving force.

"It's an extremely important market," said Don Potter, president of the Southeastern Michigan Health and Hospital Council. "Hospitals know that women make more than two-thirds of health decisions," Potter added.

However, area hospitals aren't just trying to appeal to women as the managers of family health care dollars; they're directly targeting their health needs and meeting them with convenience, flexibility and sensitivity. Services, like genetic cancer counseling, low-cost, car seat rentals, seminars on caring for senior parents and Japanese childbirth education, may not seem available within today's bustling and efficient health facilities, but these and others abide in Oakland County.

More options for women

Having a baby is a case in point.

While 10 years ago, women knew relatively little about the delivery process before having a baby — and spent more time in the hospital after giving birth — today, health insurance companies typically don't pick up the tab for lengthy, inpatient stays. In response, most hospitals have refashioned the process to accommodate women in other ways. Not only have educational services increased, but choices and amenities have, too.

Maternal services at Pontiac's St. Joseph Mercy Hospital-Oakland (SJMO) are an example of the basic kinds of services soon-to-be mothers should expect.

Rather than transferring a woman from room-to-room during the birth of her child, labor, delivery and recovery occur in



Childbirth redefined: At Providence Hospital's Family Birthing Center in Southfield, left to right, Claudia and Michael Pickstone, of Birmingham, marvel at their daughter Sofia Francesca in the same homelike room where Claudia gave birth just 21 hours ago. Meanwhile, Adelina Biland, the baby's grandmother from Switzerland, comfortably awaits her turn. The center's philosophy emphasizes choices and empowerment for women.

a single room within the hospital. SJMO's rooms are decorated with pastel colors, handmade quilts and oak furniture. An infant warmer, recliner, oak rocker and cradle sit bedside and medical equipment is inconspicuously hidden. Perhaps most surprising, though, are the jacuzzis that flank several of SJMO's delivery rooms.

St. Joe's also stresses infant care education to compensate for shorter hospital stays, according to Jeriann Dodd, assistant director, OB Services, SJMO. "The big emphasis is to make sure that the mother's teaching needs are met before they leave ... We want to know that she knows what she's doing before she

gets out the door."

"We're also family-centered care," she said, pointing to another policy that appeals to potential female patients — visiting hours are more open, babies aren't taken to a nursery and fathers are welcome to stay overnight.

Sibling education programs, like those at SJMO, are also a common element of prenatal services and serve to help moms feel less anxious during the time of delivery. "She's more relaxed because she knows that her child is more relaxed about the whole thing," Dodd said, adding that SJMO's maternity program recently received State licensing to provide spe-

cialized care for premature and critically ill newborns.

Therefore, women who experience maternal complications don't need to seek outside treatment, she said. "Their babies don't have to be transferred, nor do the moms ... It's a huge convenience for women and it's a benefit to the hospital to provide full service."

In addition to amenities like jacuzzis, comprehensive education services and cozy birthing rooms, Providence Hospital's Family Birthing Center in Southfield offers women some unique options, including natural childbirth.

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Women's Health

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