



KiteStrings

FALL 2011

Connecting Community Providers and
Mary Bridge Children's Hospital & Health Center

State Award Honors lifesaving Newborn Heart Screening Program

For their pioneering work in screening newborns for heart defects, MultiCare Tacoma General Hospital's Family Birth Center and the MultiCare Mary Bridge Pediatric Heart Center received the 2011 Warren Featherstone Reid Award for Excellence in Health Care.

Presented September 19 by Washington State Department of Health Secretary Mary Selecky on behalf of Gov. Chris Gregoire, the award honors health care providers and facilities for exceptional quality and value in the delivery of health services.

"This test has found defects that can be fixed in two dozen tiny hearts, and saved countless families from heartache," Selecky said. "MultiCare's pioneering program sets the stage for a federal recommendation that the test be used in every hospital."

Since 2008, Tacoma General has screened more than 10,000 day-old babies with a painless test that measures oxygen in the blood. Called pulse oximetry, the test detects low levels of oxygen in the blood, which may be indicative of a heart defect. The defects can then be treated early at the Mary Bridge Pediatric Heart Center. The test is free to patients, and costs the hospital approximately \$1 per newborn for supplies. Undetected heart

defects are a leading cause of infant deaths.

"Our newborns are showing why this test could soon be saving young lives at other hospitals," said Shelly Mullin, vice president and administrator of MultiCare Tacoma General Hospital. "Mothers who give birth at our Family Birth Center find comfort in knowing their babies have been screened for heart defects before they go home from the hospital. We're honored that our work fulfills the spirit of this award."

On Feb. 14, 2008, MultiCare Tacoma General Hospital, in collaboration with the Mary Bridge Pediatric Heart Center, implemented pulse oximetry screening of all newborns in the Family Birth Center. Since 2008, congenital heart defects have been found in 40 newborns that are now being followed by a pediatric cardiologist. Defects found in five newborns resulted in life-saving cardiac surgery.

MultiCare Tacoma General Hospital was the first hospital in Washington State to offer the test to newborns, and one of very few hospitals across the nation to screen babies for heart problems.

Last year representatives of MultiCare's program were one of three U.S. hospital teams selected to travel to Washington, D.C., to present results of their pulse oximetry newborn screening programs to



the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), and serve on a critical CHD screening work group. The work group made recommendations for a standardized approach to screening and follow-up. In September DHHS added critical congenital heart disease (CCHD) to the panel of disorders for which all newborns should be screened. The work group's "Strategies for Implementing Screening for Critical Congenital Heart Disease" was published in the journal *Pediatrics* in November.

Recently the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) endorsed CCHD screening for newborns.

The work that has already saved young lives in Tacoma will be implemented at Good Samaritan Hospital in Puyallup in May and could soon be saving newborns across the United States.