

Darnall Women's Health Clinic celebrates one-year mark

By Patricia Deal, CRDAMC Public Affairs

FORT HOOD, Texas--The 2,534 babies born at Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center's new Women's Health Center since its official opening last year will not remember their experience.

But the mothers (and fathers) will remember every minute from before the birth to day of discharge.



Ensuring that Soldiers and their new babies have a pleasant and memorable experience is exactly what the new WHC is designed to do, per the MEDCEN Commander, Col. Patrick Sargent.

"The birth of your child is a celebrated moment in your life. Our goal is to enhance patients'

experience so they are comfortable, happy and appreciative of the care they receive here," he said. "From the latest technology and equipment to the caring staff, each and every mother is treated with compassion and the highest quality medical care."

The 44,000 sq. ft. facility built adjacent to the main hospital features officially opened May 6, 2011. It features many desirable amenities such as more space for patients and staff and the latest state-of-the-art equipment.

The nine Labor/Delivery/Recovery (LDR) rooms are approximately 400 sq. ft. each offering a spacious, comfortable and more family-friendly environment. Patients stay in the same room for labor and delivery, and there's more than enough room for guests and visitors. Each room has a window, large bathroom, personal storage area, and a large sleep area for expectant mothers and their guest. Babies stay with moms and special equipment like warmers in the rooms enhance newborn care.

"The new rooms are wonderful. There's so much more space. The old rooms were so small it was often difficult to accommodate the entire birthing team and family members all at the same time," said Maj. (Dr.) Adriena Beatty, obstetrician at the WHC. Not only can Beatty legitimately make the comparison as a provider, having worked in both old and new centers, she also delivered her son in the old section. "Everyone loves the new rooms. They definitely make patients and their families much more comfortable and at ease."

One mother who delivered one of her babies in the old WHC is excited to deliver her next baby in the new room. "They are great. Everything's new and has all modern equipment. They're very roomy. You might not think so, but it does make a difference," said Kristy Castillo, who is five months pregnant with her third child. "I'm happy with all the services I've received. I absolutely love my doctor. No doubt everyone here cares about me and my baby."

For one first-time mom, the new rooms have helped ease her anxiety about delivering. "They are homey and roomy, plus they have everything I'll need. It helps, too, that the staff here has been so helpful to me," said Sarah Marceron, who is expected to deliver May 26. "The wireless internet in the room is an added perk. My family is unable to be here for the birth so we will Skype with them so they can see the new grandbaby right away."

In addition to providing more room for labor and deliveries, the expanded space helps improve patient services and access to care.

"Everything about the new facility helps promote a friendly and caring atmosphere. The atrium in the waiting room makes it bright and sunny. The play area is a godsend as it occupies kids while mom waits," said Sharon Moton, OB/GYN Clinic reception head nurse. Moton has worked in women's health services at Darnall since 1993 and has nothing but praise for the recent changes. "I've heard so many positive comments over the last year. Even small things like the addition of a men's restroom in the reception area is a nicety that is appreciated by our dads who accompany moms on their appointments. We have four check-in stations with electronic numbering and pager system now so the pregnant ladies don't have to stand in line for so long."

With the expansion and consolidation of services, some of the wait times for routine visits have lessened, per Moton.

"We can work with patients to get them seen for acute care even without an appointment and we work around their schedules by saving end of day appointments for teachers and other working women," she said.

Another benefit of the center is the addition of an Omni-cell machine which allows providers to dispense common medications for pregnant women such as pre-natal vitamins, iron pills or insulin. The on-the-spot dispensing at the end of their visit eliminates a trip to the pharmacy for moms.

In addition to obstetric care, the clinic provides gynecological care to patients. Clinics provide basic services and the WHC handles all referrals.

The new facility has one treatment room and two procedure rooms which allows for increased out-patient care. In the old center with limited room availability, there were long wait times for appointments for treatments and procedures such as a tubal ligation.

The WHC is still doing all the same services they've always provided, but the new facility has given them more room to better manage their workflow and scheduling, and to offer a bit more patient care services, Beatty explained.

"We do whatever is necessary to help our patients. If we need to stay longer with one patient, we just apologize to our next patient. No one is just another number to us, nor is one delivery like the thousands before it," she concluded. "Unlike civilian hospitals, we aren't driven by monetary rewards. Our satisfaction comes in making our patients comfortable and confident and ensuring they are well-taken care of. Every patient matters and we strive to make their experience a pleasurable one."



Lorraine Shannon, nurse practitioner at CRDAMC's Women's Health Center, visits her patient Nikkaguin Piernicky who had just delivered baby Alannah and new dad Capt. Tom Piernicky, 1st Cavalry Division. Since its official opening last year, thousands of moms have enjoyed the comfort of the WHC's spacious Labor/Delivery/Recovery rooms which provide a comfortable and more family-friendly environment for families. (U.S. Army photo by Patricia Deal, CRDAMC Public Affairs)



Sergeant Matthew Mays, 1st Cavalry Division, plays with his son, Liam Mays, eight months old, while they wait with mom Lindsey at the CRDAMC's Women's Health Center. The play area is one of many family-friendly features of the WHC, which officially opened last year. (U.S. Army photo by Patricia Deal, CRDAMC Public Affairs)



Debbie Black, nurse practitioner at the CRDAMC's Women's Health Center, pulls a blood glucose monitoring device from the center's Omni-cell for a patient, saving her a trip to the pharmacy. The Omni-cell with its on-the-spot dispensing of common medications for

pregnant women is one of many enhancements in the WHC which officially opened last year. (U.S. Army photo by Patricia Deal, CRDAMC Public Affairs)



Certified Nursing Assistants Shekeya McCallister (left) and Christine Binsfeld prepare a procedure room at the CRDAMC's Women's Health Center which officially opened last year. The addition of one treatment room and two procedure rooms allows for increased out-patient care with less wait times for appointments. (U.S. Army photo by Patricia Deal, CRDAMC Public Affairs)