

BLOOD SERVICES

Pregnant Mother Survives Massive Blood Loss

When Vicki McGuire gave birth to her third child, she lost about half of the blood in her body.

Shown: Vicki McGuire recognizes the importance of blood donation services after losing nearly half the blood in her body during pregnancy and delivery. Ms. McGuire received 20 units of transfused blood products, thanks to Blood Services at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital.

Had she not been at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJ), with experts available 24/7 and the ability to rapidly transfuse blood, both she and Molly, now two, might have died.

About 16 weeks into the pregnancy, Ms. McGuire was diagnosed with placenta previa, in which the placenta covers the cervix. This worsened into the rarer placenta accreta, in which the placenta grows too deeply into the uterus wall. Placenta accreta can cause severe bleeding and other life-threatening problems and often requires a premature delivery by Cesarean section. "My job was to stay alive and keep growing this baby. I went to a hospital with the highest level of care available: a Level I Trauma Center and a Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU)," said Ms. McGuire, then 37 and an ICU nurse at RWJ.

A few weeks later, blood started streaming down Ms. McGuire's legs. Her placenta had grown through her uterine wall (placenta percreta) and into her bladder. To treat her fast if potentially deadly bleeding started, Ms. McGuire spent 92 days in the hospital, until after Molly was born. She saw her husband and her children, then ages 8 and 6, one hour a week.

"Placenta accreta and placenta percreta are among the most high-risk obstetric hemorrhage emergencies," said Joshua H. Segal, MD, whose OB/GYN practice took care of Ms. McGuire. Dr. Segal, a Clinical Instructor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical

School, and his partners worked with a team that included specialists in maternal-fetal medicine, gynecologic-oncology, urology, interventional radiology, neonatology, and nursing, along with staff from the operating room and the transfusion services team. They developed a plan to see Ms. McGuire through her pregnancy and a planned Cesarean hysterectomy (delivery by Cesarean section and removal of the uterus).

Preparing for the massive blood loss doctors expected during the delivery was key. "Having the necessary blood on the shelf 365 days a year helped us save the lives of Ms. McGuire and her baby, and enables us to save and support other patients," said Sally M. Wells, Business Development Liaison for RWJ Blood Services, which collects and stores blood for the healthcare network.

Ms. McGuire delivered her baby at 34 weeks as planned. Before that, doctors put embolization catheters (materials to lessen bleeding, inserted through narrow tubes) into her groin and stents (thin, flexible tubes) into her ureter to guide surgery to detach the placenta from her bladder before the Cesarean hysterectomy. During a typical Cesarean section, a woman loses 500-1000 mL of blood; Ms. McGuire lost 4,500 mL. The team rapidly transfused 20 units of blood products (blood, platelets, and plasma) through a central line. At a small, community hospital, using that much blood could have depleted the blood supply.

After her massive blood loss, Ms. McGuire was in the ICU briefly and spent another six

days in the hospital. Molly spent 20 days in the NICU. "It's life altering to survive something that not all women survive," said Ms. McGuire, who is now the New Jersey co-chapter leader of the Hope for Accreta Foundation. She supports women with placenta accreta and raises awareness of the need to go to a hospital with a Level I Trauma Center and a Level III NICU.

About one in 20 people in New Jersey will need a blood transfusion. "Donating blood is a simple thing that any healthy person can do. It has an immediate impact on somebody's life," said Wells. Donating blood takes about an hour (less than 10 minutes to draw the blood). After the needle is inserted, it is painless and safe. People can donate blood at one of the hospital's donor centers in New Brunswick or Somerville and at community blood drives.

Visit www.rwjhdonorclub.org or call 732-235-8100 ext. 221 to donate at RWJ New Brunswick or 908-685-2926 to donate at RWJ Somerset.



Shown: Sally Wells, with Blood Services at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital, encourages folks to visit the web site to learn how you can become a member of the donor club and to discover new opportunities and nearby locations to donate blood and platelets. Vicki McGuire is living proof that it does help save lives. Visit www.rwjhdonorclub.org.