

CASE STUDY
PALMS WEST HOSPITAL



FQHC Maternity Partnership Helps Facilitate NICU Expansion



Background:

Palms West Hospital

Located on a spacious 94-acre campus, Palms West Hospital is a 204-bed facility that offers high-quality care for a full complement of healthcare services. Its women's healthcare services include the New Life Center, a state-of-the-art obstetrics unit that features a Ob Hospitalist Group (OBHG) Type A Obstetric Emergency Department (OBED) staffed around the clock by OB/GYN hospitalists. Palms West is an HCA East Florida Affiliate.

Challenge:

Meet Birth Volume Requirements to Establish a Level II NICU

The leadership of Palms West Hospital sought to bring their plans to expand to a Level II NICU to fruition. To meet requirements for a Certificate of Need (CON), the hospital needed to increase its birth volume.

Solution:

Partner with FQHCs to Generate Maternity Referrals

The primary strategy was to leverage the high-risk care available from specially trained OBHG hospitalists to attract more referrals from Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) in the region. Hospital officials held meetings with the director of the three FQHC clinics, who noted that his clinic patients were not receiving tubal ligations despite a demand for them. The idea of referring patients to Palms West so they not only could receive the best possible OB care but also receive tubal ligations was very attractive, and a partnership was born.

Results:

Palms West Receives Desired CON for Level II NICU

The partnership was a resounding success. Palms West met its birth volume goals and received a Certificate of Need from the state to establish a Level II NICU. Referred FQHC patients gave birth and received their tubal ligations at Palms West, and the records were faxed back to the clinic for their files.

“More than anything, we provide this extra service that most FQHCs don’t provide, and we provide the continuity of care that is also desperately needed,” said OBHG Team Lead Dr. Isidro Martinez. “That is why they keep sending us patients. We get between 15 and 20 deliveries a month just from the clinics. That’s a big jump.”

“We allow our patients to go where they want to go, and we encourage them to utilize centers where medical records can be easily shared,” said Dr. Charles Gonick,

director of the three FQHC clinics in the area. “There is an ongoing need for tubal ligations, so for those patients who want them, it has been beneficial.”

Dr. Martinez noted that the OB hospitalist program at Palms West also has helped reduce the unit’s malpractice risk significantly. “Right now, the nursing supervisor and the CEO don’t want us to go anywhere,” he said. “We are very appreciated there because of how we handle their high-risk situations. The fact that we are there 24/7 makes a huge difference. We are taking a lot of the diagnosing work away from the nurses. It’s a huge advantage. ... I hear it all the time: ‘Thank God you guys are here.’”

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— Dr. Isidro Martinez
Team Lead, Ob Hospitalist Group



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