

# Hospitalist-CNM Collaboration Helps Hospital Prevail in Vigorously Competitive Birth Market



CASE STUDY BELLEVUE WOMAN'S CENTER/ ELLIS MEDICINE



Located in  
**Niskayuna, NY**



The only **regional  
women/infant inpatient**  
care facility



Performs about  
**2,700 deliveries** per year



**OBHG partner** since  
**July 2010**

## Challenge:

### Maintain Delivery Volume in a Highly Competitive Market

New York has seen a slow but steady downward trend in births for more than a decade. Currently, births statewide are down 7%, and births in the northeastern region of the state (where BWC is located) are down 11%. This situation has created intense competition for a shrinking patient

pool among area hospitals that offer maternity care services. BWC officials wanted to maintain the hospital's delivery volume in the midst of this extraordinarily competitive birth market.

## Solution:

### Establish a Hospitalist Program that Collaborates with CNMs

In July 2010, BWC contracted with Ob Hospitalist Group (OBHG) to place a team of OB/GYN hospitalists in the facility 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, to establish a recognized center of OB quality within the community. It was imperative that the incoming obstetricians philosophically embrace collaboration with Certified Nurse

Midwives (CNMs), a provider group officials felt could enhance their prospects for stable birth volume. OBHG delivers programs customized to the needs of its partner hospitals, and the team assembled for this program was chosen in part for their experience working with CNMs.

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## Results:

### Bellevue Births are Up in a Down Market

The hospitalist/CNM collaboration exceeded expectations. In a market with 11% fewer births, BWC increased its delivery volume by almost 4%.

"A good portion of that growth this year was from CNM practices," said OBHG Medical Director of Operations Dr. Nicholas Kulbida. "They have been bringing in more patients. We have developed a good relationship that I would like to take to the next level by adding an independent CNM service on the OB unit."

The growth at Bellevue has been so pronounced that Dr. Kulbida is mildly concerned about the supply of staff OB/GYNs to meet the demand. Private practices in the area have not grown to keep pace, and few new OB physicians have moved to the area recently. "In the future, if we don't see these OB physician practices growing, there is no way they can handle the volume," he said.

The ability to offer midwifery services represents a competitive boon for BWC without impeding traditional OB practices. Many local OB/GYNs sign out to the hospitalists, and the CNMs only strengthen the collaborative team coverage for those physicians. In New York, Medicaid reimburses CNMs the same as OB/GYNs for equal services, which rightly acknowledges the value of CNMs in the Labor and Delivery unit.

"Women have been asking for certified nurse-midwives, so there is a demand," Dr. Kulbida said. "It's attractive to women because it offers alternatives. The community has embraced it."

"I do believe that it is important for women in the community to have choices for their pregnancy and birth experiences, as well as gynecological care," said Dr. Margaret Holcomb, co-owner of Capitol Region Midwifery. "I believe that having this option at Bellevue enhances an already excellent program."

The hospitalists and CNMs enjoy a mutually respectful, friendly relationship.

"Dr. Kulbida has a great understanding of the role of a community midwife. He has been very supportive of all our endeavors," Dr. Holcomb said. "Working together with the hospitalists has allowed our practice to grow and thrive. We enjoy working with them very much."

Hospital officials hope the hospitalist/CNM collaboration will make transitions of care even more seamless and possibly save money over time. "It's a combination of necessity and smart business," Dr. Kulbida said. "It's a new financial model."

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**Dr. Margaret Holcomb**  
Certified Nurse-Midwife  
Capitol Region Midwifery

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