

Alton Memorial Hospital Team Award - Promoting Vaginal Births

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ALTON – Although Alton Memorial Hospital was unable to hold its annual Employee Awards Banquet again this year because of the pandemic, the hospital was still able to honor several of its top staff members for their 2021 accomplishments during the recent Health Care Week.

Among the awards handed out was the Virginia Ilch Team Quality Award. The “Promoting Vaginal Births” team was the winner for its part in a 2021 quality initiative as a part of the Illinois Perinatal Quality Collaborative.

“The aim was to support vaginal births and reduce primary cesarean sections to reach the Healthy People goal for a low-risk cesarean section target rate of 24.7 percent by December 2021,” said Debbie Turpin, chief nurse executive at Alton Memorial.

AMH had a C-section rate of 22.5 percent in 2020. A team of nurses and physicians led the 2021 efforts for AMH, which included:

- Educating physicians and nurses on ACOG/SMFM labor management guidelines and labor support techniques.
- Developing patient education with positive messaging to women and families about vaginal birth strategies that prevents C-sections through prenatal classes and patient education.
- Utilizing care team huddles and debriefs to identify and review delivery decisions for consistency with processes and protocols.
- Sharing provider-level measures with the department with the goal of working toward transparent goals.
- Developing checklists to ensure criteria for C-sections were met.
- Implementing training for identification and appropriate interventions for malpositions.
- Implementing standardized assessment and response to fetal heart rate concerns.
- Implementing a workflow that supports shared decision-making with providers, nurses, and patients.

“While the 2020 cesarean section rate of 22.5 percent was below the target rate, this team continued to work on their objectives and their patients reaped the benefits,” Turpin said. “Their 2021 cesarean section rate dropped to 18.5 percent --well below the target rate. Congratulations to all of them for a job very well done.”

Team members are Jessica Mossman, Renee Strowmatt, Dr. Jamie Hardman, Dr. Rachel Durham, Diane Lahey, Erin Unverzagt, Katie Furl, Malinda Turner, Laura Gibbs, Nicole Woods, and Haley St. Peters

“The OB team, both physician and nurses, is a very high functioning team that puts the patient first,” said Jessica Mossman, manager of the AMH Women’s Health and Childbirth Center. “We have educated and adopted the new ACOG (*American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists*) and SMFM (Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine) guidelines, and our team has really worked to implement more movement in labor. The nursing team has worked to educate each other about encouraging positioning of the patient to help move safely toward a vaginal birth. We are very lucky to work with the ILPQC, which put this quality project in front of us.”

The Virginia Ilch Excellence in Quality Team Award was named for a longtime AMH employee whose career revolved around implementing quality processes to ensure the hospital was and is providing excellent care to members of our community.

Members of the Promoting Vaginal Births team at Alton Memorial Hospital are Jessica Mossman, Renee Strowmatt, Dr. Jamie Hardman, Dr. Rachel Durham, Diane Lahey, Erin Unverzagt, Katie Furl, Malinda Turner, Laura Gibbs, Nicole Woods, and Haley St. Peters. Along with Cindy Bray, director of Patient Care (far right), all are in the photo except for Dr. Hardman and Nicole Woods.