

Autumn's Wonderful Experience

When Autumn Reilly gave birth by Caesarian section earlier this month at Northwestern Medical Center (NMC) her newborn son, Christopher, was gently placed on her chest. "It was really nice for us to still have that bonding moment," Reilly said. In the past, surgical equipment attached to Reilly would have made it difficult to allow the baby rest easily on her chest after birth. Mother and child would traditionally have been separated.

Reilly, who had never had surgery of any kind, said having her newborn with her helped to reduce her anxiety. "It's still the most traumatic thing I've ever been through," she said. "Emotionally it was easy... My husband got to be there the entire time," explained Reilly. Her husband, Christopher Meunier, was able to hold their new son in the operating room. Despite the surgery, the staff "made it about us and our family," said Reilly.

About a fourth of the women who give birth at NMC will have a C-section. Traditionally, mothers who had Caesarian sections were taken to the post-surgical unit to recover while their babies went to the Family Birth Center nursery, explained Scott Bork, director of Surgical Services at NMC. "A lot of work went into changing things," said Bork. Now mothers and babies are able to connect right after birth and remain together in the hospital.

Bork says the change in post-Caesarian care took around 2 years to complete. He explained that nurses in the Family Birthing Center had to be trained to care for post-surgical patients. Changes also had to be made in the operating room itself such as moving the oxygen monitor (normally placed on the mother's hand) to keep her hands free for holding the baby. EKG leads were also relocated away from the mother's chest so the baby could rest there after birth. According to Bork, establishing a physical connection between mother and child soon after birth is beneficial to both of them: "It creates this immediate bonding" and "it comforts the baby."

Reilly decided to choose a C-section when doctors discovered the umbilical chord was wrapped around her son's neck. "Patient-centered C-section is really where we're headed," Bork explained. The nurses who had been with Reilly during her labor accompanied her to the operating room. She praised the nurses for the care they provided and how quickly they responded when she needed assistance. Caring for a newborn while also recovering from surgery is extremely challenging. "That call button, they were there within minutes," she said. Overall "it was a really nice experience," Reilly said of her time at Northwestern Medical Center.