

Mission Hospital & Health Care System

The Mission Health Care System has a lot of experience with 17P. In fact, they were among North Carolina's "early adopters" offering 17P to their patients well ahead of many others in the state. The Maternal Fetal Medicine Specialists from Mission provided leadership to the early efforts to fund and launch the NC 17P Project. In the fall of 2005, the MFMs traveled all the way to Chapel Hill for a meeting of the Perinatal Health Committee of the Child Fatality Task Force. They used this forum to advocate for the importance of making this medication available to all eligible mothers, regardless of their income or insurance status. This meeting served as the catalyst for bills and then legislation to fund the state 17P effort.

While having physician leaders as advocates was important, it was the leadership of a core group of nurses that helped move 17P into full practice. It was this group of nurses who met and figured out how to make 17P work within their system and for their patients. They figured out who would order the medication, sign for it, track it, and inject it. They work with Residents and local health departments alike to insure that everyone understands the ins and outs of using 17P. At the initiation of the project, they found that most local providers were not aware of 17P. These nurses provide a lot of information to mothers as they make their decision about starting the treatment. The majority of their mothers who are offered 17P decide to pursue the treatment.

Because Mission Health Care serves patients far beyond Buncombe County, letters were sent to all of their affiliated obstetric clinics informing them about 17P and how to access it for their patients. When they see a mother in their high-risk clinic who is eligible for 17P they personally contact that patient's home clinic to talk about the treatment. While the knowledge about 17P in the region has improved manifold, they still find that there is much work to be done to provide information to providers.

One of their most successful partnerships is with the Buncombe County Health Department. In fact, the nurses at the health department team up with Mission to take a team approach to patient care for high-risk mothers. For example, mothers receiving 17P who have transportation or other challenges that put them at risk for missing injections may receive skilled home visits from Buncombe County nurses. This shared care is very important in meeting all of the needs these mothers may have. Mission works with many different public health centers in their region so that their patients can receive the weekly injections locally instead of traveling the long distance to the high-risk clinic in Asheville.

While a model for the state, Mission still has challenges they are facing. They have found that it is still a difficult logistical issue to be sure that mothers who are taking 17P and are hospitalized continue to receive their injections. They also found that not all of the health departments and private providers in their region are willing to offer 17P to their patients. This can pose a problem for their patients who are then forced to travel a distance every week to receive their shots.

While a round of thanks is due to the entire Mission team, special appreciation is due to two of their nursing champions – Luci Sparks and Melinda Ramage. Mission has been a wonderful leader in their region and the state for reducing the risk of recurring birth for North Carolina's babies.