

Patient: Patty Mier

Diagnosis: Pre-term infant

Referred to: NICU at
Santa Clara Valley
Medical Center

Care Team: Dr. Balaji
Govindaswami,
Chief Newborn
Medicine & Director,
Neonatal Intensive
Care Unit (NICU)

Dr. Iris Colon,
Associate Chief,
Maternal Fetal
Medicine

Polly Patel, RN,
DNP & Director,
High Risk Infant
Follow-up

NICU Team Supports Families and Brings Treatment Home

When Patty Mier delivered a pre-term infant at 27 weeks, it wasn't a surprise to her or the medical team. Doctors knew that she had suffered four miscarriages and that from the start her pregnancy had been high risk.

The baby girl, named Jazlyn (Jazy), was borderline viable according to Dr. Balaji Govindaswami, Director of Santa Clara Valley Medical Center's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). The baby had bleeding on the brain. Doctors were worried about her brain development.

Patty worked with her NICU team to make sure everything possible was being done for her new daughter. The bleeding in the brain stopped, but Jazy still had to spend three and a half months in the NICU. Patty says the medical team and other parents in the unit provided love and support. They became like family to her. Her own family and friends, perhaps uncomfortable around the tiny baby, stayed away from visiting the hospital.

"No one visited the baby," says Patty. "I'm forever grateful for my NICU family."

After Jazy's discharge, home visits were arranged from the hospital's BRIDGE program, which stands for Babies Reaching Improved Development & Growth in Their Environment. Because of the program, Patty was able to take Jazy home much earlier than normal for a baby her size.

BRIDGE follows babies in the NICU from the day they are born up to the day they leave the hospital, and then makes home visits. Founded by neonatal nurse, Polly Patel, it is a bridge from the NICU to home. It is believed to be the only program of its kind in California and possibly nationwide.



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Polly Patel, RN, DNP & Director
High Risk Infant Follow-up



“Parents feel comfortable because the BRIDGE program’s nurse practitioners know the baby’s history. They have met the parents in the NICU, and don’t have to spend time during the home visit doing an informational intake,” says nurse Patel. “We are able to focus on supporting the family, giving them peace of mind, and allowing them to have time to be parents.”

During a home visit parents practice the skills they need to care for the baby and learn ways to help siblings adjust to having a pre-term baby in the home. The program’s success has decreased readmissions for high-risk infants.

“Parents feel completely supported, and their babies get a better outcome,” says Patel.

“At first being home was scary,” recalls Patty. “I was afraid Jazy would stop breathing. The BRIDGE program told me to call them if I felt something was wrong. That eased my fears.”

Today Jazy is four years old and doing relatively well. In the years following Jazy’s birth, Patty suffered three more miscarriages.

“Dr. Govindaswami supported me,” Patty recalls emotionally. “He helped me get in contact with Dr. Iris Colon, who became my maternal fetal medicine doctor.”

After conducting a full exam, Dr. Colon, Associate Chief of Maternal Fetal Medicine, determined the reason for Patty’s miscarriages. She performed minor surgery on Patty and prescribed weekly progesterone injections and regular ultrasounds. Patty was cared for by a team of doctors and nurses, all focused on achieving a positive outcome. In September 2015, Patty delivered a full term baby boy, whom she and her husband named Elijah.

Patty was especially thankful for the support she had in the NICU, and told the medical team she would like to be able to regularly talk with NICU parents. That became a reality when she was offered a position, funded through the March of Dimes. She meets with families in the NICU, advocating for them, and communicating their needs to the medical team.

Patty’s triumph over tragedy brings hope to NICU families. Her journey has been one of apprehension and hope, and sadness and triumphs, new friends, and a new career. She says she will be forever appreciative of the NICU team and the BRIDGE program for the overwhelming support and excellent care she received.

Learn more about our Women’s Health programs, call 408.885.7925.

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