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Please tell us about the SJO Laborist Program. We've been working on the Laborist Program for four years and it finally began in January. With about 5,000 births here a year and a lot of high-risk patients, I felt so passionately about the need for it. We had the anesthesiologists, neonatologist and nurses on hand - the only piece of the team missing was the obstetrician. The OB Department chair (**Lilly Ramirez-Boyd, MD**) sent a letter to the department physicians and had responses from six doctors, including myself. I was willing to spearhead the program, and it's been exciting to see it develop. The program started as a three-month pilot during which I was able to demonstrate a clear benefit, so the pilot was extended another three months. When I was able to show continued benefit we received a go ahead for the program to continue. For a new idea to work you have to believe in it and we did, and the hospital believed in us, and we made it happen. We now have 16 obstetricians on the panel, and most of us take two to three shifts per month. Currently we have laborist coverage on holidays, weekends and week nights, and we're working toward 24/7



coverage.

The way we've modeled the program it's beneficial to everyone. Our bench-marks already show how it decreases risks. RN deliveries are down 50 percent; documentation is up from 74 to 82 percent; and there have been several "saves," by laborists with life-threatening situations on the Mother Baby Unit - seizure, post partum hemorrhage, ruptured ectopic pregnancy and cases of fetal brachycardia. Timely care is critical, and we've been there for emergencies while the patient's doctor is en route. Even doctors on campus are five minutes away.

We're one of the few hospitals in the state with a Laborist program, but it's quickly becoming the standard of care. We still respect the family's birth plan and their doctor is still in charge. We've had positive feedback from patients, who feel safe having access to a qualified obstetrician when their doctor isn't available. The hospital has less risk, higher patient satisfaction and improved patient flow. Patients coming in with false labor or a urine infection are in and out quickly, and nurses like not having to call doctors at all hours.

Obstetricians appreciate having the convenience and stress relief with the option of sign-

ing out to the laborist. Nationally the burn-out rate for OB/Gyns is very high; on average they practice 17 years, then quit obstetrics - after 12 years of training! I believe this program has the potential to extend the life expectancy of their professional life.

Dr. Bhatnagar is a Fellow of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and International College of Surgeons. In addition to obstetrics she has a robust gynecology practice, providing minimally invasive hysteroscopic and laparoscopic procedures.

Dr. Bhatnagar has been practicing since 1997. Her practice, Women 2 Women, began in 2003 in Irvine. Hers is one of 21 practices from the entire country to receive the National Commission for Quality Assurance (NCQA) Award for Quality by demonstrating effectiveness in serving diverse populations. Her cultural competency stems, in part, from her own background. Born in Delhi, India, Dr. Bhatnagar has lived in cities throughout India, as well as in Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines. She speaks eight languages. She and her husband, a software architect, have two children, ages 4 and 5.

The Laborist Program and Randy Fiorentino, MD, were featured on Fox 11 News on Labor Day. To see the clip visit http://www.sjo.org/For_Physicians_Only/Press_Room.aspx



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