Managing Birth Partners on L&D

Todd Rosen, MD
Director of Maternal-Fetal Medicine
Associate Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology
Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School
Our initial plan at RWJUH

- Follow the policy of most other units in the hospital and not allow any visitors on L&D, antepartum, or postpartum
- Our visitor ban began at approximately the same time NYP implemented their policy on 3/23 in response to 2 asymptomatic patients* becoming sick shortly after delivery and exposing multiple HCP to the coronavirus
- The policy was approved by the RWJUH CEO.

*Breslin N et al. AJOG MFM March 27 2020
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajogmf.2020.100111
Some of you may be aware the Englewood Hospital administration decided to ban support persons from L&D after some NY hospitals had done the same. This decision was made without consultation with our department and was based on misinformation that most other hospitals in Bergen county were doing the same. While this decision was reversed after cooler heads prevailed, it raised some important issues that we may all be facing again very soon:

1. If a hospital feels compelled to make this kind of a decision, many patients will seek delivery at surrounding hospitals that will allow a support person to be present. This would place undue pressure on surrounding hospitals and increase the burden and risk on our neighboring institutions and rapidly deplete their resources.
2. Conversely, if neighboring institutions decide to institute such a ban on support persons in the labor room, many will leave them and come to us – placing undue risk on our institution and using up our scarce resources and putting our staff at increased risk.
3. We have had to balance the effect on our own institution and risk to mothers on L&D and our staff with the greater good of solidarity with surrounding institutions and the community at large.
General Visitation Guidelines

NO VISITORS WILL BE ALLOWED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE in every RWJBarnabas Health hospital and healthcare facility, including Behavioral Health and outpatient facilities.

Limited exceptions include:

- Pediatric units (only ONE parent/guardian will be permitted)
- Maternity and Labor & Delivery units (only ONE significant other/support person can visit)
  
  For Monmouth Medical Center in Long Branch, please see their maternity visitation notice.
  
  For Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital in New Brunswick, please see their maternity visitation notice.

- Neonatal Intensive Care Units (TWO parents/support persons can visit)
  
  For Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital in New Brunswick, please see their NICU visitation notice.
We now screen asymptomatic patients

• Began Friday 4/10 at 5PM
• 42 patients screened as of 8:00 PM on 4/16
• 7/42 were positive – 16.7%
• 2 patients admitted upon further questioning that either they or their birth partner had been symptomatic
• 5/40 true asymptomatic positives – 12.5%
Safeguard the Right of All Laboring People to Have Support During COVID-19 Crisis

Jessica Pournaras started this petition to Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and 2 others
On March 26, 2020, 32,082 people signed this. Add your voice!

Victory
This petition made change with 613,651 supporters!
Andrew M. Cuomo: Safeguard the Right of All Laboring People...
‘Women Will Not Be Forced to Be Alone When They Are Giving Birth’

In response to some private hospitals’ decision to bar partners, New York will order all hospitals to allow partners in delivery rooms, despite the coronavirus risk.
Make Dr. Anthony Fauci People Magazine’s Sexiest Man Alive

Dr. Anthony Fauci is America’s top expert on infectious diseases. His tireless work to educate and support Americans has affected all of us.
March 29, 2020

TO: Acute Care Hospitals Licensed Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 8:43G

FROM: Judith M. Persichilli, R.N., B.S.N., M.A., Commissioner

SUBJECT: One Support Person in Labor and Delivery Settings
The Department of Health (Department) considers one support person essential to patient care throughout labor, delivery, and the immediate postpartum period. Therefore, **hospitals are required to allow one designated support person to be with the expectant mother during these times.** This person can be the patient’s spouse, partner, sibling, doula, or another person they choose. In these settings, this person will be the **only support person allowed to be present during the patient’s care.** They may not transfer these duties to another person. This **restriction must be explained to the patient in plain terms, upon arrival or, ideally, prior to arriving at the hospital.** Hospital staff should ensure that patients fully understand this restriction, allowing them to decide who they wish to identify as their support person.
Labor and delivery support persons must be asymptomatic for COVID-19 and must not be a suspect or recently confirmed case. Additionally, hospital staff must screen the support person for symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g., fever, cough, or shortness of breath), conduct a temperature check prior to entering the clinical area, and every twelve hours thereafter, and screen for potential exposures to individuals testing positive for COVID-19. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) should be given to and worn by designated support persons. Once in the labor and delivery unit, the designated support person must have extremely limited access to other areas of the hospital and not be permitted to leave and re-enter the unit.

Hospitals may restrict the presence of a designated support person should a shortage of PPE require use of the resources by direct patient care givers.
Draft Policy for Birth Partners (4/16)

- Symptomatic birth partners will not be permitted to enter L&D
- COVID (+) patients will be permitted to have an asymptomatic birth partner
- Patients and/or birth partners who have tested positive prior to presenting to L&D are considered recovered if they meet the following criteria:
  - At least 14 days have passed since symptoms first appeared AND
  - Resolution of respiratory symptoms (i.e. cough, shortness of breath) AND
  - At least 3 days (72 hours) afebrile without the use of fever-reducing medications
NJ Protect The Right of Laboring Mothers to Have Support Person During COVID-19 Crisis

On March 21, the Department of Health issued clear guidelines on treating patients in labor during the COVID-19 crisis. These guidelines determined a support person, whether a spouse, partner or other chosen person, is essential to care for the patient during labor, delivery and in the postpartum period. The