



HOLY FAMILY HOSPITAL of Bethlehem Foundation

President's Report August 2023 Ambassador Michele B. Bowe, GCM Statistics Tell the Stories But Not the Dreams

At first glance, Holy Family Hospital is welcoming, immaculately clean and calm. Located in the heart of downtown Bethlehem, where it is dusty and the traffic chaotic, the Hospital's warm and efficient staff greet each patient as a friend or relative. Of course, many patients are friends and relatives as the families have lived nearby for generations. Everyone has a friend or relative who has worked for the Hospital. Seventy percent of the babies of greater Bethlehem were born at the Hospital. It is a community touchstone welcoming all in need without regard to creed.



Many of the Hospital staff were born there and their children were born there too. There is something special about our Hospital and it is not just the beautiful building and oasis-like courtyard. The statistics and medical outcomes tell an impressive story of great clinical care delivered with a very small budget. Last year the Hospital provided over 150,000 services, delivered over 4,600 babies, and cared for more than 470 sick and premature newborns, including 42 born before 32 weeks gestation. It also offered care to the Bedouin communities in the desert and villagers living in isolated communities. All this care was delivered for only \$5,000,000. Over 200 families count on the high-quality employment of the Hospital each year. In short, the Hospital is a blessing for the whole community, not just the patients who come for care.

The statistics are impressive, but they don't tell the whole story. In January, the 100,000th baby was born on the Feast of the Epiphany. A beautiful healthy baby boy joined his family as the first child of a young couple just beginning their family. To us, it was our 100,000th, but to the young couple it was the child they began to dream about as soon as they were married. It was the baby boy who made his mother a mom and his father a dad. He was the answer to their prayers.

Recently I met a young couple in the NICU with a very premature baby needing lifesaving cardiac surgery. Their first child arrived early, not ready to be born. As soon as he was delivered, Dr. George and the NICU staff began arranging for his surgery and transfer to a hospital in Jerusalem with a pediatric cardiologist. As soon as he was stable, they would transfer him for surgery and bring him back to Holy Family Hospital to convalesce post-surgery. In most countries such a transfer is simple. In Bethlehem it is complicated. The baby would need official documents to cross the checkpoint. He would also need two coordinated ambulances- one to bring him to the checkpoint in Bethlehem and the other to pick him up from the Israeli side. A doctor from Holy Family Hospital would have to wheel him across in a portable incubator equipped with oxygen, his ventilator, and a clean closed environment. Later the Hospital would need to arrange for the return of the transfer incubator, praying that another baby would not need it before it was returned to Bethlehem.



The statistics marked this event as a preterm delivery with complications and NICU admission with a transfer to Jerusalem. The reality was more complicated. The transfer required multiple phone calls, waiting for answers, governmental signatures, and approvals on both sides all while trying to stabilize the baby. The social worker counseled the young couple and assured them that the Neediest Baby Fund would cover the transfer which they could never afford. The staff consoled the young mom and dad as the ambulance sped away in the night with their first born.



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Meanwhile three more babies were born, and one was admitted to the NICU. On average, 13 babies are born at the Hospital each day and a little more than one of these will need NICU care. But the reality is that on some days 8 babies are born and on others as many as 20 or 22 are delivered. Last week, 5 babies weighing less than 2 pounds each were admitted to the NICU within hours of each other. Deliveries don't respect clocks, shifts or staffing. The staff must always be prepared for the busiest and most complicated shifts. They must also always remember that the last baby of their shift may be the very first for a couple that has been waiting for years for a baby. Each baby has a story, and every family has a dream.



While the statistics do tell the stories, they don't tell the dreams. From the figures you can see that in 2022, 4,604 babies were delivered on a Hospital budget of about \$5,000,000 or roughly \$1,086 per baby. Most of these deliveries are straightforward, and the families go home after 24 hours to introduce their newest addition to the extended family and friends. Other families struggle with babies having extended NICU stays for months before they can introduce their babies to the grandparents, siblings and aunts and uncles. The social workers comfort and counsel these mothers and fathers. The medical staff teach them how

to care for and interact with their tiny babies often weighing less than a pound and a half. They coach these parents and encourage them to dream. While the principal tasks of the NICU are to allow the premature babies to develop and grow, they also must give the parents the confidence to interact with their fragile newborns and encourage the crucial bonding which facilitates the growth and development of the babies.

It is the intangibles and unquantifiable that count at Holy Family Hospital. The baby clothes gifted to new mothers who have none, the groceries and blankets packed for distribution for poor villagers and Bedouins, the home deliveries of milk and bread in the snow and the free prenatal vitamins are not in the statistics. But it is these gestures which tie the community to the Hospital. The value of five years of residency is not quantifiable as it is hard to calculate how many lives a resident doctor once graduated will go on to save or improve. A newly trained midwife will deliver thousands of babies over her career. She will likely remember the first one and some memorable others, but each mom will always remember the details of her own deliveries and the kindness and compassion of the midwives and doctors. The details of the care and the deliveries become the stories of promise and hope. The walls of the Hospital become the holders of the dreams for the futures of the 100,000 babies born just 1,500 steps from the manger.



For Holy Family Hospital Foundation, the stories and the statistics are important. They reflect our commitment to be excellent stewards of the generous gifts of our donors. To know that the services sponsored by our \$3,075,000 fundraising budget include more than 4,600 births, over 470 NICU admissions and thousands cared for by the Mobile Medical Clinic tells us that every donated dollar is well spent. Hearing the stories of the 220 nurses and midwives trained and launched at our Hospital last year assures us that future generations of mothers and babies will be cared for because of donations supporting training today. Knowing that thanks to our donors, every medical decision affecting a mother or baby is based on best practices and not cost, assures us that we are offering the best care for the mothers and babies of Bethlehem. Every gift at Holy Family Hospital Foundation is treasured and well spent in furthering our mission of delivering life, peace, and hope. Come visit and see the hope for yourself.

Blessings and prayers from Bethlehem.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "M. Bowe".

Ambassador Michele B. Bowe, GCM
President



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