

# Kangaroo Care

By Steven Nester



**T**he love and nurture parents provide to a newborn is the sustenance every child needs the moment it's received into the family. But not all children make the quick trip from delivery room to home so easily. Complications brought on by premature birth, complications during birth, or birth defects require that some infants stay in the hospital for extended periods.

The goal of Medical Center of McKinney's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit is to keep babies healthy and families happy by keeping both together. The just completed \$5.3 million renovation, expansion, and upgrade of the NICU and Women's Services Unit

fulfills this mission and ensures premium care for more babies as well as the best of care for babies who are born early.

Not every hospital has a unit that affords such care and equipment, but in and around McKinney the choice for expectant mothers in search of a birthing center is now easy. The Medical Center of McKinney's NICU was once a one-room facility with four beds; it now has seven beds for babies and, with the adjacent women's services, takes up the better part of the hospital's second floor. The equipment is state-of-the-art and the expanded staff is trained to treat premature and developmentally challenged newborns.





*The NICU's spacious family suite, where baby and parents can spend the night, has a pull-out bed and flat screen TV.*

While mom only spends a few days in the hospital after delivery, parental TLC is a large part of the pediatrician's recovery plan. The new McKinney facility provides families with the comfort of home, ensuring the bonding process can occur whenever a parent can come by, twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. The upgrade in services allows the NICU to give specialized care to more babies.

Charlotte Womack, RN, BSN, Manager, Nursery, NICU and Pediatrics, explains the very important upgrade in services and what it means. "We used to provide Level I services. That's uncomplicated care for newborns. Level II, which this hospital upgraded to in 2005, allowed us to increase our services with specially skilled staff and equipment for children born as early as 32 weeks. Level IIIa care is for premature births as early as 28 weeks," she said.

Taking a cue from Mother Nature, Womack calls it kangaroo care. "Parents no longer need to travel to a Level III facility in another town. We can keep the family together from the very first hour to provide skin-on-skin contact to enable the bonding process. We try to make this unit the space of the mother, father, and baby. When it's time to bring the baby home, the NICU has a special suite, a family room with a pull-out bed and flat screen TV where the baby and parents can spend the night. Parents can get used to taking care of the child while still having nurses and their expertise at hand."

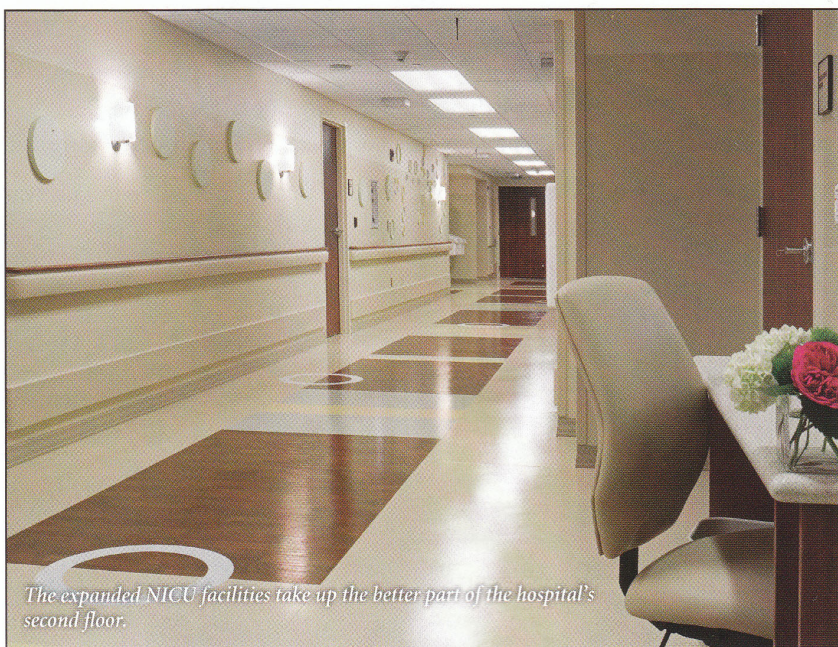
For residents in and around McKinney faced with the difficulty of leaving a newborn in a NICU facility, the Medical Center of McKinney is the best choice around for convenience and care. "Our Level III NICU

has the capability of providing care to the younger, more fragile or sickest premature infant," said Womack. "They often require more support for a longer period of time. Their systems are underdeveloped and we must provide an environment that closely mimics intrauterine life to allow for proper growth and development. Level III infants are at a higher risk for complications and sometimes require more invasive procedures," she said. Also, staff care of infants includes modifying behavior of the newborns by 'teaching' them to nurse and how to coordinate breathing and swallowing.

Dr. Alok Jain is the board certified pediatrician and neonatologist who runs the new unit. He credits his team – which includes a team of physicians board certified in both Neonatal-Perinatal Medicine and General Pediatrics and a neonatologist on call twenty four hours a day – with making the new NICU what it

is. "Previously, the neonatologist attending the delivery made most of the decisions pertaining to infant's care with little input from the rest of the team," says Dr. Jain. "At our new facility we are a team. The doctor is the head but not the sole decision maker. Nurses offer input as well as the pharmacy staff. A very important part of our team is parents. If you exclude parents for long periods of time while the baby is in treatment, the bonding process is disrupted and this is unhealthy."

The equipment, too, is crucial. New bassinets nestle babies like the womb, and 'giraffe beds' allow infants to be transferred with less strain. Special kangaroo chairs allow mothers and children to nurse and bond in comfort. Since the most common affliction



*The expanded NICU facilities take up the better part of the hospital's second floor.*



among premature babies usually has to do with underdeveloped lungs, blood gas analyzers, life support monitors, and respiratory devices such as ventilators are state-of-the-art. The staff is also prepared to treat hypoglycemia, but any conditions requiring surgery will be treated at the McKinney NICU sister facilities at The Medical Center of Plano or Medical City Dallas Children's Hospital.

One part of the new NICU's mission is education. The staff tries to introduce new mothers to one item of education every day, whether it concerns a baby's growth and development, or how to hold and feed their newborns. Spending time with newborns also allows mothers to learn cues of what baby wants. Another area that the NICU stresses as very important to a newborn's health is breast feeding. The NICU has five certified lactation consultants on the staff.

As a result, in 2011 the hospital was awarded the Texas Ten Step Certification, which acknowledges that everything is in place to provide care and encourage and educate mothers to breast feed. Also, according to Womack, Medical Center of McKinney was rated number ten out of the 120 hospitals in the HCA network.

"I'm excited about our new facility and I'm happy for people of McKinney. They really deserve it," said Dr. Jain.

*About the author: Steven Nester is an educator and freelance writer who hosts Poets of the Tabloid Murder, a mystery author interview show which may be heard on Public Radio.*

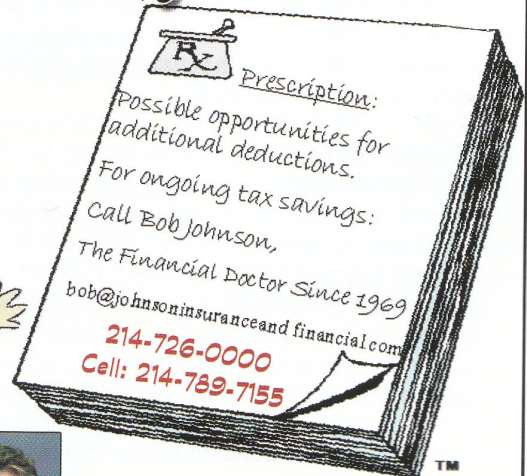
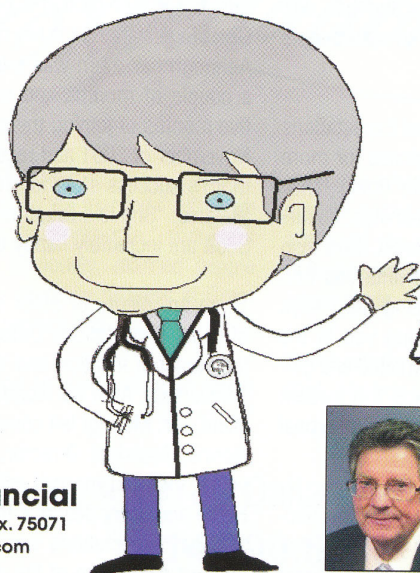
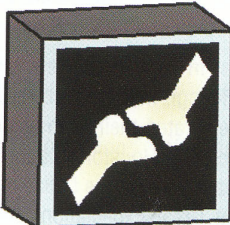


PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MEDICAL CENTER OF MCKINNEY

Giraffe beds and kangaroo chairs allow mothers and babies to nurse and bond in comfort.

# Tax Strategies for Physicians

## X-Ray Results



**Johnson Insurance & Financial**  
7290 Virginia Pkwy, Suite 2500, McKinney, Tx. 75071  
[www.johnsoninsuranceandfinancial.com](http://www.johnsoninsuranceandfinancial.com)



**Bob Johnson,**  
Nationally recognized for Tax Strategies &  
Retirement Planning - Articles published  
in Fortune Magazine & CNN Money.com

Registered Representative of and securities offered through Woodbury Financial Services, Inc. Member FINRA, SIPC. Johnson Insurance & Financial and Woodbury Financial Services, Inc. are not affiliated entities. Neither Woodbury Financial Services, Inc. or its representatives offer tax or legal advice. For assistance in these matters, please consult your tax or legal advisor.