



The MetroHealth System
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News Release

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MetroHealth Awarded \$395,170 Grant to Advance Care for Opiate-Dependent Moms

(Cleveland) – The Governor’s Office of Health Transformation (OHT) has awarded MetroHealth Medical Center \$395,170 in grant funding to reduce lengthy hospital stays and promote improved health outcomes for mothers who are dependent on heroin, or other opiates, and their newborn babies. The award, part of the Maternal Opiate Medical Support (M.O.M.S.) initiative championed by the Kasich Administration, will bolster MetroHealth’s current efforts to mitigate the effects of neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS).

Studies have shown that it is unsafe for women to taper off opiates entirely during pregnancies, due to concerns over potential stillbirth. Buprenorphine, packaged under the brand name Subutex, has been associated with less neonatal dependency than methadone and has shortened the extended hospital stays of exposed newborns by more than one-third. As a result, the pilot program is expected to lead to fewer admissions to the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) for 125 women and babies enrolled in the program over the course of the grant.

“The Governor’s Office of Health Transformation is committed to identifying and supporting initiatives that lead to healthier outcomes,” said OHT Director Greg Moody. “MetroHealth is an innovation leader and the State of Ohio is glad to assist in its efforts to build a healthier community.”

The program is designed to give the mothers both choice and convenience. They will have options as to where to obtain medical care, drug addiction treatment and ancillary services. MetroHealth has partnered with University Hospitals to help make the program as accessible as possible and to help women throughout Northeast Ohio.

“The strength of this pilot is that it assembles resources that currently exist in the community and stitches them together into a ‘quilt’ designed to wrap around opiate dependent pregnant women to facilitate the pregnant woman having the best possible outcome for herself and her baby,” said Jennifer Bailit, MD, Executive Director of the Women and Children’s Patient Care Unit.

MetroHealth’s pilot is part of a joint partnership between the Ohio Departments of Medicaid and Mental Health and Addiction Services called the Maternal Opiate Medical Support (M.O.M.S.) Project. NAS commonly results in lengthy NICU stays as babies are born

experiencing withdrawal symptoms, respiratory complications, low birth weight, feeding difficulties and seizures.

In addition to treatment, the project will also support a limited amount of non-clinical services that are not reimbursable by Medicaid but that have been found to greatly assist in long-term recovery. Funds can be used for housing vouchers for transitional housing as well as transportation or brief babysitting for medical and treatment appointments.

“In the midst of Ohio’s opiate epidemic, it is easy to forget that there are some individuals who are experiencing the effects of this addiction who never chose to use drugs – babies born to opiate addicted mothers,” said Tracy Plouck, director of the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS). “It is important to give children the best start in life that we can, and the M.O.M.S. project gives us an opportunity to do just that.”

The pilot was helped by a second \$35,000 grant from March of Dimes. The multi-disciplinary opiate dependent mother’s clinic at MetroHealth already sees roughly 100 patients a year.

MetroHealth is a longtime leader in childbirth and addiction treatment services. The Medical Center provides care to 2,900 newborns annually. MetroHealth’s Division of Maternal-Fetal Medicine is the most advanced practice to specialize in caring for high-risk pregnancies in the region and offers the only Maternal-Fetal medicine fellowship in Cleveland. MetroHealth’s Level 3 (highest-level) NICU cares for the smallest and sickest infants. The Medical Center also is recognized by the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services as a provider of both mental health care and addiction treatment.

About The MetroHealth System

The MetroHealth System is a public health system committed to providing health care to everyone in Cuyahoga County, Ohio, and improving the health of the community overall. Its 6,000 employees deliver care to everyone at its main campus, just west of downtown Cleveland, and at 16 community health centers. MetroHealth is home to Cuyahoga County’s only Adult Level I Trauma Center and Comprehensive Burn Care Center. In the past year, MetroHealth provided more than one million patient visits in its hospital and community health centers.

MetroHealth is also an academic medical center committed to teaching and research; each of its active physicians holds a faculty appointment at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine. MetroHealth has earned Magnet status, which places it in the top seven percent of all hospitals nationwide for nursing excellence.

MetroHealth’s mission is, “Leading the way to a healthier you and a healthier community through service, teaching, discovery and teamwork.” For more information, visit www.metrohealth.org.