

Trial hopes to cut premie deaths

St John of God Subiaco Hospital maternity patients have been invited to participate in a trial aimed at identifying premature birth risk.

Many of the hospital's obstetricians are supporting a potentially life-saving research project which aims to identify patients at risk of giving birth early.

Preterm birth affects up to 9% of births in Australia every year and is the single greatest cause of death and disability in children up to five years of age.

Around 20 to 40% of cases are related to bacterial infections of the reproductive tract, many of which are asymptomatic.

The Preterm Birth Prevention Study uses a new diagnostic test that may help to identify women who are at risk of giving birth prematurely because of bacterial infection.

For women who return a positive test result, the study is also testing whether a probiotic treatment regime can be used to prevent preterm birth from occurring.

If successful, this testing and treatment program will be a major breakthrough in pregnancy care and will likely save the lives of hundreds of Western Australian infants and many more worldwide.

Ten of the hospital's obstetricians are inviting eligible patients to participate in the trial.

Participants are required to complete a brief questionnaire and self-collect two vaginal swabs for analysis by a microbiologist.

Head of Obstetrics and Gynaecology



Trial participant Belinda Popovski with her daughter Ellie, newborn Lucas, and Dr Michael Gannon.

Dr Michael Gannon said that by participating in the study, patients can help researchers confirm if the new test and treatment program effectively predicts preterm birth risk and reduces the overall rate of preterm birth.

"Most importantly, participation may also help to delay or prevent pre-term labour and reduce complications for both mother and baby," he said.

Trial participant Belinda

Popovski, whose son Lucas was born at full term in June, said she felt strongly about contributing to science and had participated in clinical trials at the hospital during all three of her pregnancies.

"This trial was particularly important to me as quite a few of my friends and family members have given birth prematurely," she said.

"I am pleased to have contributed to knowledge that will

potentially help keep mums and their babies safe."

As a provider of neonatal specialist care for babies who are born prematurely or unwell and need extra support, St John of God Subiaco is well positioned to support the study.

It is the only private hospital in Perth with a neonatal unit that provides onsite 24 hour specialist care delivered by neonatal pediatricians and specialist nurses.

Indigenous business hub comes to Subi

One of the former Princess Margaret Hospital's heritage buildings is now an Aboriginal business hub.

Godfrey House, built more than 100 years ago as accommodation for the children's hospital chief medical officer, is now home to the Noongar Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which has 360 members.

The heritage-listed building is now fully tenanted with 10 Aboriginal-owned businesses.

WA Treasurer and Indigenous Affairs Minister Ben Wyatt opened the hub last Tuesday.

"The overwhelming request we get from Noongar businesses, and other Aboriginal businesses, is that we need opportunities to learn from each other," NCCI chair Gordon Cole said.

"Co-locating in one space gives us the opportunity to talk to each other more frequently and share our experiences and our challenges as we try to grow our businesses and find success and economic freedom."

Mr Cole said the purpose of the NCCI, which was founded two years ago and was previously based in East Perth, was to help Noongar people "to create their own opportunities for wealth".

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