



“Cedars-Sinai Transport Program to Start April, 2001”

by
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A new program to provide increased access to first-rate neonatal services will begin April 2, 2001, at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. The transport program, including both ground and air transport, will make level 3 NICU care more readily accessible to babies in community hospitals. Staffed entirely by a Cedars-Sinai NICU team, the transport program will arrange to pick up babies at referring hospitals in need of a higher level of care. These may typically include babies with cardiac problems, babies in need of specialized surgeries, or tiny infants whose needs go beyond the usual care of a community hospital.

The transport team which will be dispatched includes a respiratory therapist, a neonatal nurse, and a neonatologist, neonatal fellow, or neonatal nurse practitioner. All neonatologists, and many RTs and RNs have been trained as a part of the team, and will be on a rotating on-call assignment, ready to leave within minutes of a referral.

Upon initiation of a referral, a three-way call is conducted and recorded to confirm a transport. The referring hospital, the assigned Cedars-Sinai neonatologist, and Cedars-Sinai's transfer center discuss the need and appropriateness of the transport to Cedars. No discussion of financial responsibility or insurance coverage takes place when the referral is to obtain a higher level of care. (Occasionally, a "lateral" transport -- for the same level of care -- may be requested, where the care can be provided just as appropriately in the referring hospital. This might occur, for example, when a baby is born at a hospital at a great distance from the parents' home.) When the Cedars-Sinai NICU is near capacity, an admit bed is kept available for critical admissions. This may, on occasion, influence the ability to accept all referrals. If this bed is requested for transport of two babies at the same time -- one with a higher level of care needed, the baby with the higher level of care will have priority.

Once a transported baby's medical condition which necessitated the transport is stabilized, the baby will be transported back to the referring hospital (e.g., the baby has recovered sufficiently from a surgery to convalesce in the community hospital, etc.). For ground transportation, an ambulance will be stationed at Cedars-Sinai. The EMTs will be available in the NICU, along with our NICU team, for any potential referrals. EMTs will serve as driver and back-up help, but will not provide hands-on care for the babies. The Cedars-Sinai team will be familiar with the entire ambulance operation and facilities, so that they could, in an emergency, function independently. All persons in the ambulance will wear seat belts, with infants secured by special strapping inside the incubator. If it becomes necessary for a member of the medical team to unbuckle in order to meet the baby's needs, the driver must be notified immediately.

Air transport will be conducted by Mercy Air, with our transport team on board. Team members have received special training for the transport program and have been fitted with fire-retardant flight suits and helmets.

A toll-free number has been established so that the community will have easy, uncomplicated access to the neonatologist for consultation or referral when there is difficulty managing a patient.

Each shift will visually check the transport equipment and supplies, which will be kept separate from other NICU equipment, so that a complete inventory of necessary supplies will be available at a moment's notice. The Cedars-Sinai transport team will be alerted by pager when a referral is made, and will depart in the ambulance or helicopter within 30 minutes of acceptance of the referral. Careful charting is done throughout the transport and becomes a part of the baby's medical record. Unlike some transport programs, the service will be from NICU to NICU, without hand-offs occurring in an emergency room or helipad. The goal is to maintain good communication with the referring hospital and provide the finest care to patients with the fewest interruptions in the continuity of care.

Our NICU Transport Team will be headed by:

Asha Puri, MD, Director, Neonatal Transport

Sabitha Sehgal, MD, Associate Director, Neonatal Transport

Renee Sirmay-Dora, RN, Transport Coordinator

This new program will be one more step in Cedars-Sinai's goals to remain among the best hospitals in the country, providing a community service and providing the best possible care to patients.

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is one of 8 staff neonatologists at Cedars-Sinai. In addition to providing clinical care in the NICU, she is Associate Director of the Infant Progress Clinic as well as Associate Director of Neonatal Transport.