

For Immediate Release
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CRMC Maternity Awarded Certificate of Excellence

The New York State Department of Health recently recognized the Cortland Regional Medical Center (CRMC) Maternity Department staff for its participation in an immunization program to protect newborns against the hepatitis B virus. A Certificate of Excellence, presented to Maternity Nurse Manager Tammy Finn, R.N., “recognizes the efforts to prevent perinatal and early childhood transmission of the hepatitis B virus by establishment of a policy to routinely immunize babies at birth.”

Hepatitis B is a serious public health problem that affects people of all ages. It is caused by a highly infectious virus that attacks the liver and can lead to severe illness, liver damage, and in some cases, death. Each year approximately 19,000 women with chronic hepatitis B virus (HBV) infections give birth in the United States. Pregnant women infected with HBV can transmit the infection to their babies. Many of these babies develop lifelong HBV infections, and up to 25% will develop liver failure or liver cancer later in life. Both the New York State Department of Health (DOH) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommend a birth dose of HBV vaccine for all newborns. It is estimated that 90% of perinatal HBV infections can be prevented if vaccination is given within 12 hours of birth.

According to Finn, CRMC initiated its policy in September 2006 and since then, 90% of all newborns have received the HBV vaccine. She noted that while the vaccine is strongly supported by the DOH and AAP, it is still a voluntary program and parents can opt to refuse to have their baby vaccinated. It is recommended that all expectant mothers seek the advice of their own physicians as to whether to have their newborn vaccinated for HBV.

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