

## **Update on our maternity services**

We are acutely aware of the emotions surrounding pregnancy and birth and recognize the additional stress reserving a place at a hospital can pose. As you may be aware, the maternity services in Hong Kong have faced a huge and sudden increase in the birth rate. This has resulted in all private hospitals being forced to introduce a monthly quota for the number of births they can physically and safely accommodate.

This is a dynamic situation that we discuss with the obstetricians who use the hospital regularly, informing them of any change in policy. To enable us to accurately control the number of bookings in a fair and equitable manner all reservations must be made through an obstetrician. Please do not contact the maternity unit directly.

**Some frequently asked questions are answered below:**

### **How do I reserve a room at the hospital?**

Your obstetrician will book the room for you as far in advance as possible. Bookings are considered from 9 weeks of pregnancy, if accompanied by a clear scan and blood test results. Currently we are unable to take any more bookings for ladies due before 30 Jan 2009. However this will change on a day-to-day basis.

### **If my doctor has booked a bed for me am I guaranteed a place?**

In the vast majority of cases you will be able to give birth at Matilda, however booking a place is not an automatic guarantee as it will still be dependent on the number of ladies we have on any given day. If you go into labour please ALWAYS contact the hospital first (2849 0321 / 2) to confirm bed availability. If your obstetrician requests you call them first, then please do so, but you will also need to call the hospital.

Should your booked room category not be available, you may choose a different available room. The published room category rate will apply.

### **Will the situation change?**

Please be assured that we are doing everything we can to improve the situation. Circumstances will change as government policy changes, additional maternity beds are offered and more midwives are available.

Many ladies who book their bed in advance may leave HK or they may have their baby earlier than expected. Therefore, places may become available nearer your due date, and your obstetrician will continue to be in regular contact with the maternity unit.

## **Is there a waiting list?**

No. There is no waiting list, but you can ask your Doctor or the clinic to check at regular intervals.

## **Could this situation have been foreseen?**

Neither the HA or private hospitals had foreseen such a large increase in the number of mainland women choosing to have their children in HK. Although we have only seen a slight increase in our bookings from mainland mothers, we have been indirectly affected.

This situation regarding a shortage of midwives was predicted by the hospital several years ago and we have an active and ongoing recruitment campaign.

There is a dire shortage of midwives in HK. We have tirelessly lobbied the HK Midwifery Council for several years to recognize midwifery qualifications obtained in the UK (which was the case prior to 1997). We know a number of midwives who have expressed an interest to work in HK; however the process to obtain HK registration is long and laborious and at best take a year. Recently new midwives have arrived and our efforts to get more ongoing.

## **If I have booked a bed in another private hospital and then one becomes available at Matilda can I transfer?**

Please keep to your original booking.

## **Why doesn't my obstetrician just book me a bed in every private hospital?**

Obstetricians should only book their clients at one hospital. Beds are scarce and booking in several hospital means that beds are then blocked and other ladies are unable to secure a place within the private system. If obstetricians are found to be double booking, the hospital may refuse to acknowledge their bookings.

## **Why do you limit the number of c/sections or inductions of labour that you perform on any one day?**

We have a finite number of beds and midwives and therefore in order to provide a safe and effective service we need to ensure we have sufficient beds and facilities available to cater for both elective procedures such as inductions and C/sections, together with women who are admitted in spontaneous labour. This is not purely limited to the maternity unit, as we also need to ensure the availability of an operation theatre team in the event of an emergency arising.

## **How about the doctor's fees I've heard they are increasing?**

Although we ensure that all doctors are suitably qualified to practice, they do so independently of the

hospital. This means that we provide the facilities, midwives and support staff and although we collect the fees on the doctors behalf, they are not employed by us and do not pay for the use of our services. As a result we have no control over their fees; so if you do have any queries please discussed them directly with the doctors concerned.

We have both a general practitioner and obstetrician on site 24 hours a day to perform on-call duty for emergencies. Paediatricians provide onsite emergency cover from 6pm to 8am and anaesthetists from 7pm to 7am.

We advise prospective parents to check with their obstetrician about the level of obstetric emergency care they provide to ensure that, if needed, there is an obstetrician and/or, Paediatrician and/or anaesthetist available for their delivery.

### **Surely if someone turns up in labour you will have to admit them?**

If the maternity unit is full we will not able to provide the accommodation or a midwife to attend to the delivery without neglecting existing clients on the ward, and potentially putting the labouring mother or unborn baby at risk. Therefore an ambulance will be arranged to transfer the lady to a government hospital. This is why it is essential that you ring the hospital in advance of your admission, so that in such an unlikely event alternative options can be explored at the earliest opportunity.

Non-local expectant mothers can find more information by visiting the following website:  
[www.ha.org.hk/preg](http://www.ha.org.hk/preg)

This information is current as of 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2008 but is subject to alteration without prior notice as the situation changes.