



SAVING THE BABY

THANKS TO FAST ACTION IN THE LABOR AND DELIVERY UNIT, A BABY SURVIVES A RARE CONDITION.

After delivering a healthy baby girl at Jersey City Medical Center (JCMC) in 2011, Vanessa Imme knew she wanted to go back there to have her next child. Vanessa, now 34, was impressed by the attentive care she received from hospital medical personnel, including her OB-GYN, Ahmed Yousry, MD, a member of the RWJBarnabas Health medical group. She also enjoyed the hospital's perks for expectant

mothers. "I couldn't believe I had my own private room with a view of the Statue of Liberty," she recalls.

However, while her daughter Adrianna's birth was "normal and very easy," her son Mateo's delivery in May 2019 was a harrowing one. "We almost lost him," she says.

It took an emergency C-section and a weeklong stay at JCMC's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) to give little Mateo a healthy start in life.

A LUCKY VISIT

Vanessa, the director of leasing and sales for a Jersey City real estate development and management company, and her husband,

Matt, had already faced challenges on their road to becoming a family of four. "After I had my daughter, I suffered from three miscarriages before conceiving Mateo," she recalls. "When I became pregnant with him, I was nervous the whole way."

The pregnancy seemed to be going along smoothly until about 38 weeks in, when Vanessa began spotting. She went to her doctor and was told it was normal and not to worry.

However, when she continued to spot days later, she felt something was not right, even though she didn't have any other symptoms. Dr. Yousry was out of the office that day, and Vanessa was advised



Above, at left, Adrianna, Mateo and Dr. Yousry; at right, the Imme family at home: Vanessa, Matt, baby Mateo and Adrianna.

to go to JCMC so she could be monitored immediately.

In the Labor and Delivery Unit, Vanessa had an internal exam. "Everything looked fine, so they were going to release me," she recalls. "But they had placed heart rate monitors on my stomach per hospital protocol, and all of a sudden, my baby's heart rate dropped."

By a stroke of good fortune, Dr. Yousry happened to be on the Labor and Delivery Unit floor that day and was able to evaluate Vanessa right away.

"I could tell the baby was in distress because his heartbeat would drop and come back, showing me that he was fighting," says Dr. Yousry. "I did not want to wait any longer. We immediately took Vanessa to the operating room to take the baby through a cesarean section. From the time she came to Labor and Delivery to the time the baby was out, the delivery took less than 20 minutes."

Because Mateo was born at just 4 pounds, 3 ounces, he was taken to JCMC's NICU, a Level III Regional Perinatal Center, where he stayed for one week. "We sent him there just for observation because of his small size, but he was very strong," says Dr. Yousry.

FINDING THE CAUSE

While examining the placenta after Mateo's birth, Dr. Yousry was able to determine that the cause of the baby's distress was placental abruption, which occurs when the placenta partially or completely detaches from the uterus before childbirth. Because the baby depends on the placenta to receive oxygen and nutrients from the mother's blood, delivered via the umbilical cord, placental abruption can be dangerous and even fatal to the unborn child.

"It can happen to any pregnant woman at any time during pregnancy, but especially toward the end," says Dr. Yousry. "Vanessa's case was acute, meaning that it happened suddenly, without warning."

"The spotting she experienced was not unusual for a 38-week pregnancy, though placental abruption cannot be ruled out. If she had not happened to come into the hospital that day, there's a very good chance the baby wouldn't have survived."

The cause of Vanessa's condition is unclear, but scarring from previous miscarriages may have prevented the placenta from fully attaching to the uterus. While placental abruption is rare, occurring in only about 1 percent of pregnancies, other risk factors include diabetes, hypertension, smoking and carrying multiples.

Vanessa was released from the hospital a few days before Mateo. "Being released without my son was one of the hardest moments in my life, but what got me through it was knowing he was in the best care," she says. "The NICU nurses exceeded my expectations and provided me with so much support, even encouraging me to breastfeed when I was most vulnerable and contemplated giving up. I couldn't have done it without them."

Today, Mateo is smiling, sleeping well and gaining weight. "He's such a good baby," she says.

Looking back, Vanessa says she can't imagine giving birth at any other hospital, especially given the challenges of Mateo's birth.

"The location was so convenient to my

BEAUTIFUL BEGINNINGS

The Lord Abbett Maternity Wing at Jersey City Medical Center, made possible by a \$1 million donation by investment firm Lord Abbett & Co., is now open. The 17,500-square-foot state-of-the-art facility has 20 private rooms designed to promote bonding and provide the best outcomes for newborns, mothers and families. "Our shared vision was to create an environment where every woman who decides to deliver at our hospital will have a private room where she can heal after giving birth, bond with her newborn and immediate family, and spend time together with her extended family," says Lance Bruck, MD, Vice President & Chairman, Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology & Women's Health, Jersey City Medical Center.

home in Jersey City—a six-minute Uber ride, to be exact. Every second on the day of his birth was crucial. I can't imagine what could have happened had I had to sit in Manhattan traffic," she says. "My husband would deliver my breast milk to the NICU in the middle of the night and be back home within 15 minutes." But most of all, she is grateful for the quick action of Dr. Yousry and the team at JCMC. "They saved my son's life," she says.

To learn more about maternity services at Jersey City Medical Center, visit www.rwjbh.org/maternity.