

Nursing Team from Ghana Spends One Week Training at Sara Lee Center for Women's Health as Part of Global Effort to Improve Childbirth Conditions

For most women in the United States, the idea of childbirth includes a private hospital room with family and friends at the bedside. The room is quiet and calm, there's an epidural on-hand to help manage the pain and cesarean-section services are ready in case an emergency occurs. But in many other parts of the world, childbirth is not so idyllic. In Ghana, women deliver in one large labor room, and epidural pain medication is rare. Each year, hundreds of women die while giving birth. Most of the deaths are caused by excessive bleeding and pre-eclampsia, serious conditions that are usually considered treatable or even avoidable in the West. In Ghana, however, overcrowded hospitals and a lack of access to specialized training make these high-risk conditions even more dangerous.



Nurses in NICU: Kerri Smith, MSN, RNC, NNP-BC, a nurse practitioner at the Sara Lee Center for Women's Health at Forsyth Medical Center, explains neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) procedures to the nurses from Ghana

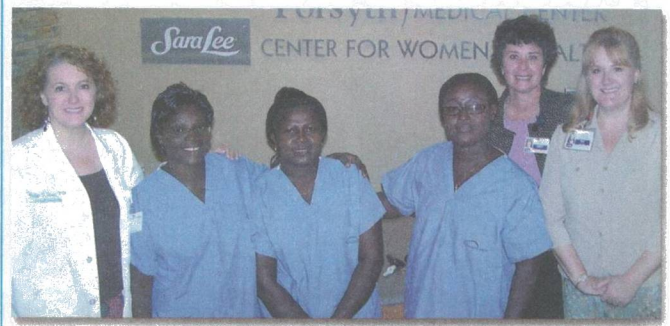
But Forsyth Medical Center's Sara Lee Center for Women's Health is helping change that. In early June, the Sara Lee Center for Women's Health hosted three nurses from Ridge Hospital in Accra, Ghana, who were seeking new ways to treat their country's high-risk pregnancy patients. The visit was part of an ongoing exchange between the Winston-Salem community and Ghana that was established in November 2004 by Kybele, Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to improving childbirth

conditions worldwide through medical education partnerships. "Maternal and infant mortality in many developing countries is unacceptably high," says Karen Bartoletti, vice president of the Sara Lee Center for Women's Health. "Many of the causes are easily preventable or treatable, if hospitals have the right tools and the training to take advantage of them. By participating in exchange programs like this, we can share our knowledge and best practices that can have a significant impact on improving the health of women and babies, not just in our own community, but across the globe."

The Ghanaian nurses – Dinah Asante-Mensah, Rebecca Fofu Larkai and Winifred Gladys Nyarko – spent one week shadowing nurses at the Sara Lee Center for Women's Health.

"Ridge Hospital is a large regional hospital that has about the same number of deliveries each year as Forsyth Medical Center, but the space is very inadequate and the infrastructure is limited," explains Medge Owen, M.D., an obstetric anesthesiologist with Wake Forest University School of Medicine who practices at the Sara Lee Center for Women's Health, and founder of Kybele. "By bringing three nurses who work in leadership positions at Ridge Hospital to the Sara Lee Center for Women's Health, we hope to help make their system more efficient and lower mortality rates for mothers and newborns."

Ridge Hospital has seen tremendous improvements since its partnership with Kybele began in 2007. In addition to developing a strategic plan for the hospital and introducing morning meetings where doctors and nurses can



Ghana Nurses at Sara Lee Center for Women's Health at Forsyth Medical Center: Medge Owen, MD, obstetric anesthesiologist with Wake Forest University School of Medicine who practices at the Sara Lee Center for Women's Health at Forsyth Medical Center; Dinah Asante-Mensah, deputy matron for nursing administration at Ridge Hospital in Accra, Ghana; Rebecca (Becky) Fofu Larkai, head of the labor ward at Ridge Hospital; Winifred Gladys Nyarko, head of the obstetrical and gynecology ward at Ridge Hospital; Karen Bartoletti, vice president of the Sara Lee Center for Women's Health at Forsyth Medical Center; Ann Smith, director of women's services for the Sara Lee Center for Women's Health at Forsyth Medical Center.

discuss patients' cases before rounds, Kybele has also helped the hospital acquire ultrasounds, fetal monitoring equipment, and the tools necessary to administer pain relief for childbirth. All of these measures, combined with exchanges such as this one, have helped change childbirth conditions at Ridge Hospital. In fact, last year, Ridge Hospital experienced a 30-percent reduction in delivery-related newborn mortality and a 20-percent reduction in maternal mortality.

But for Asante-Mensah, Larkai and Nyarko, seeing the nurses from the Sara Lee Center for Women's Health in action really helped everything gel.

"When Dr. Owen and the other doctors and nurses come to Ghana and tell us how they manage their cases successfully, we understand," says Asante-Mensah, the deputy matron for nursing administration at Ridge Hospital. "But seeing is believing."

The educational opportunities, however, weren't limited just to the Ghanaian nurses.

"This was a tremendous sharing opportunity for everyone, Ghanaian and American alike," Bartoletti explains. "It was extremely eye-opening for all of us."