

Health+

Live better
with
Southcoast
Health

Charlton Memorial Hospital

| St. Luke's Hospital

| Tobey Hospital



On Your Team

Southcoast experts help student athletes avoid sports injuries

Also in this issue:

- >Walking for Diabetes Management
- >Streamlined Neurological Care
- >Maternity Services
- >Fall Wellness Calendar

SCH-006

 Southcoast[®] Health

More than medicine.

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Southcoast Health System
101 Page St
New Bedford, MA 02740

From the CEO

Southcoast's Dynamic 20-Year History



It's hard to imagine that Southcoast Health came into being just 20 years ago; in two short decades, we have achieved so much!

In 1996, we employed 3,600 people; now, we are the largest employer headquartered in our region with a staff of more than 7,400. We have more than 650 talented and highly skilled physicians and advanced practice practitioners, who deliver some of the most sophisticated care available anywhere. We have grown our services, including creating:

- > The first community-based cardiac surgery program
- > A robust cancer program with two cancer center locations
- > One of the most successful weight-loss surgery programs in the country
- > Two urgent care centers
- > The region's first hospital dedicated to behavioral health: Southcoast Behavioral Health

And we've done all this with a continued emphasis on providing clinically excellent compassionate care. Whether at the bedside or in a support role, our employees are passionate about their work, the people they care for, and the impact they have individually and collectively on improving the quality of life in our region.

It is truly an honor and a privilege to serve as President and CEO of Southcoast Health, and I am confident that our next 20 years will be as productive and dynamic as our last.

Best of health,

Keith A. Hovan
President & CEO, Southcoast Health

Answers.

Access.

Convenience.

More.

The new
southcoast.org

 **Southcoast Health**



Southcoast VNA

Dignity Therapy

Giving comfort to patients and their families at the end of life

Southcoast VNA has recently begun offering Dignity Therapy, a groundbreaking supportive intervention for patients facing serious or life-limiting illnesses.

Dignity Therapy improves end-of-life experiences for patients by giving them a chance to record meaningful aspects of their lives and leave something behind that can benefit their loved ones in the future. Patients meet with a trained interviewer and are encouraged to talk about their lives and what matters most to them. The conversations are recorded and transcribed into a permanent document that can be passed on to loved ones for generations.

To learn more about Dignity Therapy and the Southcoast VNA, call **800-698-6877**.

Community Benefits

Improving Our Health

What Southcoast's Community Benefits Program means to our communities



As a not-for-profit health system, Southcoast Health

annually provides the communities we serve with millions of dollars in free care and benefits. In 2015, that amounted to **\$18.8 million** for our region.

The Southcoast Community Benefits Program is dedicated to improving access to healthcare and wellness programs for those who might otherwise do without through these and many other initiatives:

- > Free screenings, education, immunizations and other health services via the Southcoast Wellness Van
- > Pregnancy prevention and youth risk behavior programs through RAPPP (Responsible Attitudes toward Pregnancy, Parenting and Prevention)
- > Cancer screening and education
- > Helping individuals enroll in health insurance

Learn more about Southcoast's Community Benefits Program and find our latest Community Benefits Report at southcoast.org/community-benefits.

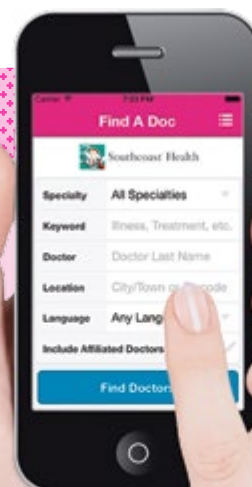
You Deserve a Great Doctor



The only thing better than a great doctor is one who's also part of a great health system.

To find a Southcoast physician:

- > Visit southcoast.org/doctors
- > Call Care Connect at **844-744-5544**
- > Download the Find a Doc app



Sports Savvy

Orthopedic experts share tips for preventing sports injuries

Whether it's in a gym or out on a field, participating in sports offers important lessons to young people, including how to work as a team, the value of competition and the joys of physical activity. The downside is the risk for injury. Fortunately, orthopedic specialists at Southcoast have the expertise to help student athletes and parents reduce that risk — or if injury does occur, they are ready to provide the best treatment options.

Matthew Baltz, MD, an orthopedic surgeon for Southcoast, has treated his fair share of young athletes from

elementary, middle and high school. "It's extremely common to see injuries among students in those age groups," he says, describing fractures, as well as twists and sprains to knees, shoulders, ankles and wrists.

In addition to these sudden traumas, orthopedic physicians are treating more overuse injuries in young athletes. These tend to affect the joints and the connective tissues as a result of repeated stresses, such as those endured by a pitcher's throwing arm, a tennis player's elbow or a runner's knees.



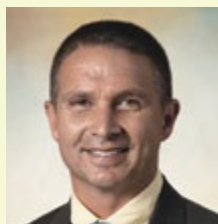
Why it's important

Of course, everyone wants to avoid the pain and missed playing time associated with injury, but with young athletes there are also concerns for their long-term health. Young bones

Part of the Team



Matthew Baltz, MD



Joseph Lifrak, MD

Doctors lend their expertise to local programs

Matthew Baltz, MD, and Joseph Lifrak, MD, orthopedic surgeons with Southcoast, have on-the-field experience with sports medicine.

Dr. Baltz oversees as many as 15 varsity sports for the Massachusetts Maritime Academy Buccaneers, providing sideline coverage for football games and office hours for any athlete within 24 hours of an injury. He is also the team physician for the Wareham Gateman baseball team, part of the Cape Cod Baseball League, which provides training for college-age students and young men who want to showcase their skills for professional scouts.

Dr. Lifrak works with players from Providence College, including the hockey, volleyball and cross-country teams. He is on hand every Tuesday to evaluate and treat any athlete with an injury and has assisted with everything from stitching a minor cut to setting a dislocated shoulder.



Dr. Baltz (left) and Dr. Lifrak (below) work with student athletes to prevent and treat injuries.



(up to age 15 or 16) have growth plates near their ends that facilitate laying down new bone until a person reaches his or her full height. Joseph Lifrak, MD, an orthopedic surgeon with Southcoast who also treats young athletes, says that some overuse injuries are leading to irritated growth plates. "The student can be out of commission for six to eight weeks," he says.

In addition, says Dr. Baltz, "We might see problems down the line. Multiple injuries, especially those requiring surgery, such as an ACL tear at a very young age, may cause those patients to lose cartilage. The goal of surgical reconstruction is to get the student back to play, but no surgeon can restore 100 percent of the damage, and chance of re-injury is much higher."

Dr. Baltz has seen people who had multiple knee injuries in their youth come back to see him in their 20s or 30s with early-onset arthritis. At that point, he says, "We may have to go with synthetic synovial fluid injections,

or partial and even complete knee replacement, just for that person to be able to participate in activities of daily living, much less athletic participation."

Preventive strategies work

No one can avoid all impacts and falls in sports. Dr. Lifrak and Dr. Baltz agree that proper conditioning and preparation can help reduce the severity of certain kinds of injuries. Here is a brief rundown of steps that can help young athletes and their parents:

- > **Have a preseason physical.** Follow any recommendations given by the healthcare provider, especially in cases of previous injury.
- > **Warm up properly.** Get blood flowing to muscles and stretch ligaments and tendons. This also applies to preseason training — remind the body about your sport before going in full-tilt.
- > **Drink plenty of water.** Proper hydration before, during and after

activity can help prevent cramping and headaches. Don't wait until you're thirsty.

- > **Wear protective gear.** Pads, shin guards, helmets and gloves should fit well and be in good repair.
- > **Mix it up.** Playing different sports or different positions over the course of a year helps limit muscle imbalance and stress on the same joints. Also, be cautious if sports seasons overlap; do not overdo it.

Even though schools, families and teammates have invested time, heart and soul into their chosen sports, it's not good for youngsters to play with pain. Dr. Baltz says that it is important for student athletes, parents and coaches to respect the balance between sports goals and the need for a healthy body.

Learn about Southcoast Health's Concussion Management Program at southcoast.org/health+.

Going the Extra Mile

Join Southcoast Diabetes Management Program's weekly walks to increase physical activity and improve health



Michael See, MS, CDE (center), leads a weekly walking group.

More than 29 million Americans have diabetes, although a more alarming figure points to the 86 million adults with prediabetes, defined as having higher than normal blood sugar levels but not yet within type 2 diabetes range. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 15 to 30 percent of those with prediabetes will develop type 2 diabetes within five years unless they take steps to reduce risk factors.

Southcoast's Diabetes Management Program certified diabetes educators (CDE) help people see how a reasonably active lifestyle and healthy weight are among the two most powerful "medicines" available to help prevent and better manage diabetes.

Walking the talk

The Diabetes Management Program recently started a free, weekly walking program to help those living with diabetes — and anyone who wants to join in — increase their activity level. The walks, led by Michael See, MS, CDE, head out every Thursday at 5 p.m. and move along the 2-mile Quequechan River Rail Trail in Fall River's Britland Park.

Live Well with Diabetes

Southcoast's Diabetes Management Program provides education to help people live confidently with diabetes. The program covers all aspects of diabetes self-management, including meal planning, medication management, complications of diabetes and more.

To learn about the Diabetes Management Program, call **877-212-9135** or visit **southcoast.org/diabetes**.

"It's a beautiful environment for people of all ages and stages of life to connect with nature and get a little more physical activity," See says. "I think our group is special because it's multigenerational, with participants from young parents walking with a baby stroller to seniors — everyone is welcome," he adds.

Stepping toward health

The American Diabetes Association recommends getting 30 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity at least five days a week to help keep blood sugar in a healthy range. Southcoast's weekly walks welcome everyone at every physical

activity level, with sessions starting at a beginner's pace and gradually progressing.

"One of the least expensive and most effective ways to control diabetes risk factors is walking," See says. "Add the pleasant company, camaraderie and community spirit our group shares, and our weekly walks become a social event that everyone looks forward to."

Join the Southcoast Diabetes Management Program every Thursday from 5–6 p.m. for a guided walk in Fall River's Britland Park. More details are at **southcoast.org/events**.

Less Headache, More Care

Brain & Spine Center streamlines care for neurological issues

If you think of your brain as a computer, then the body's nervous system is like a network relaying messages back and forth between all parts of the body.

Problems with the body's nervous system — called neurological disorders — can be complex, often needing several forms of care and treatment. This used to mean that patients had to schedule multiple appointments until they found the doctors who could provide the care they needed. The development of the Southcoast Brain & Spine Center was driven by the current medical director, Matthew Philips, MD. Modeled after integrated practice units developed by leading medical institutions, such as the Cleveland Clinic and the Mayo Clinic, the Brain & Spine Center takes the run-around out of the diagnosis and treatment of neurological issues. This has been Dr. Philips' vision since he arrived at Southcoast in 2000.

"An integrated practice unit is a group of people who use their expertise to streamline care, so that the patient can get the absolute best and fastest care," says Alvin Marcovici, MD, neurosurgeon at Southcoast.

This streamlined process results in physicians better communicating with each other and with patients receiving all of their care at one of the five convenient Brain & Spine Center locations across Southcoast, whether for stroke



Alvin Marcovici, MD

care, neurodiagnostic services, pain management or physical therapy.

"The complaint from most patients was, 'I keep getting bounced around!'" says Dr. Marcovici. "With the Southcoast Brain & Spine integrated practice unit, clinicians and clerical staff work together so that the patient sees the right doctor, gets the right test and initiates the right treatment as soon as possible."

Dr. Marcovici also notes that internal referrals through the Brain & Spine Center are quick and efficient, with intake coordinators taking referrals from a patient's primary physician and scheduling initial evaluations, and clinicians ordering appropriate testing and treatment. "The ability to 'connect the docs' is invaluable and saves precious time for patients," says Allison Gorski, MD, pain management specialist at



Allison Gorski, MD

Southcoast. "In the long run, this will always be the more convenient and cost-effective way to care for patients."

Dr. Marcovici believes that integrated care models like the Brain & Spine Center — as well as all of the integrated care across Southcoast — are the way of the future. "When healthcare institutions are going to be paid for results and not procedures, care across the country is going to look like the Brain & Spine Center at Southcoast," he says. "But, more importantly, patients get the care they need more quickly. I'm proud to say that Southcoast is leading the way to healthcare in the 21st century."

To learn more about Southcoast's Brain & Spine Center, visit southcoast.org/brain-and-spine.

Cancer Programs

The following programs are offered free of charge to cancer patients and their caregivers.

Breast Cancer Support Group East

For patients with a breast cancer diagnosis.

- > **Southcoast Centers for Cancer Care, Fairhaven**

☎ Call Linda Casey, LICSW, at **508-973-3000** for details.

Breast Cancer Support Group West

- > **Southcoast Centers for Cancer Care, Fall River**

☎ Call Susan Domingue, LICSW, at **508-973-7810** for details.

Introductions West

A support group for patients with any cancer diagnosis who are beginning treatment or in active treatment.

- > **Southcoast Centers for Cancer Care, Fall River**

☎ Call Susan Domingue, LICSW, at **508-973-7810** for details.

Look Good/Feel Better

Sponsored by the American Cancer Society, this program for female cancer patients addresses makeup, skin and nail care, and ways to deal with hair loss, including the use of wigs, turbans and scarves. Volunteer beauty professionals meet with small groups and participants get free makeup kits to use during and after the workshop. Please RSVP at least five days before each Look Good/Feel Better event.

- > **Southcoast Centers for Cancer Care, Fairhaven**

- > **Southcoast Centers for Cancer Care, Fall River**

☎ Call **800-227-2345** or email maureen.kwash@cancer.org.

Lung Cancer Support Group

A support group specifically for patients with a lung cancer diagnosis.

- > **Southcoast Centers for Cancer Care, Fall River**

☎ Call Susan Domingue, LICSW, at **508-973-7810** for details.

Multiple Myeloma, Leukemia & Lymphoma (MLL) Support Group

This group is intended for patients with a diagnosis of multiple myeloma, leukemia or lymphoma. Loved ones are welcome to attend. The group meets in the second floor conference room. Please call to participate. Fourth Wednesday, 2:30–4 p.m.

- > **Southcoast Centers for Cancer Care, Fairhaven**

☎ Call Linda Casey, LICSW, at **508-973-3000** for details.

Post-Treatment Group

A support group for patients with any cancer diagnosis, who are no longer in active treatment.

- > **Southcoast Centers for Cancer Care, Fairhaven**

☎ Call Linda Casey, LICSW, at **508-973-3000** for details.



Support for Supporters

A support group for caregivers of patients with cancer.

- > **Southcoast Centers for Cancer Care, Fall River**

☎ Call Susan Domingue, LICSW, at **508-973-7810** for details.

Childbirth Classes

Southcoast offers a variety of childbirth classes to suit every new family's needs. Pre-registration is required for all classes. Please call during the 16th week (10 to 12 weeks for multiples) of pregnancy to ensure placement in the class you need. Not all classes are offered at all locations.

Many health insurance companies cover the cost of classes. Be sure to contact yours to ask about coverage. Call the following numbers for information on classes offered at each location.

☎ Charlton: **508-973-7308**

☎ St. Luke's & Center for Women's Health: **508-973-5445**

☎ Tobey: **508-273-4060**

Birthing Boot Camp

The same content as in our Prepared Childbirth Series but in a condensed, all-day class. Two \$6 vouchers for lunch provided. A tour of the Family Centered Unit, infant care and car seat safety are included in this class. Please register at 18 to 20 weeks of pregnancy.

\$125/mother and companion

- > **Charlton Memorial Hospital**

☎ Call Gina Kiser, RN, at **508-973-7308** for details.

> **St. Luke's Hospital**

☎ Call Patty VanDenBerghe, RN,
at **508-973-5445** for details.

> **Tobey Hospital**

☎ Call Gina Kiser, RN, or Patty
VanDenBerghe, RN, at
508-273-4545 for details.

Childbirth Education

Topics include what to expect as the due date approaches, preparing for labor and birth, relaxation techniques, pain management, the role of the support person and a tour of Tobey Hospital's Family Centered Unit. \$100/mother and companion. Wednesdays, 6–8:30 p.m.

> **Tobey Hospital**

☎ Call **508-273-4545** or email
familyeducation@southcoast.org.

Education Programs

Infant and Child CPR for Families and Friends

Pediatric CPR course covering techniques for newborns to 8-year-olds. Pre-registration is required. Call for dates and times.

\$40/person, \$60/two people

> **Center for Women's Health**

☎ Call Patty VanDenBerghe, RN,
at **508-973-5445** for details.

Safe Sitter

A nationally recognized program designed to prepare adolescents ages 11 to 14 to babysit. Topics include babysitting as a business, safety of the sitter, developmental stages of children, behavior management, preventing problem behavior, injury prevention,

Where to Take a Walk

A Health+ Web Exclusive

Walking can have many health benefits, including helping to reduce risk for obesity and type 2 diabetes. So why not get out and walk more? From Fall River, to Buzzards Bay, to East Bay, our scenic South Coast has many places where you can get active while enjoying the natural beauty of your surrounding. Read about local walking routes at southcoast.org/health+.



basic first aid, choking, infant and child rescue, and CPR for infants and children. \$65 per student in advance to hold spot

> **Charlton Memorial Hospital**

☎ Call Gina Kiser, RN,
at **508-973-7308** for details.

> **St. Luke's Hospital**

☎ Call Patty VanDenBerghe, RN,
at **508-973-5445** for details.

Exercise & Fitness

Cardiac Rehabilitation

An ongoing, structured exercise and education outpatient program for individuals recovering from heart attack, heart surgery, heart disease or who are high risk. Covered by most insurances.

> **Durfee Union Complex, Fall River**

> **St. Luke's Hospital, New Bedford**

> **Tobey Hospital, Wareham**

☎ Call Meghan Kelley at
508-973-5435 for details.



Medical Fitness Program

Individualized exercise program for those with cardiovascular disease, congestive heart failure, cancer, diabetes, peripheral vascular disease, high blood pressure, chronic orthopedic conditions and those who are overweight. A doctor's prescription is necessary in order to participate. \$60/month for three times a week and \$40/month for two times a week.

> **Durfee Union Complex, Fall River**

> **St. Luke's Hospital, New Bedford**

> **Tobey Hospital, Wareham**

☎ Call Meghan Kelley at
508-973-5435 for details.

Pulmonary Rehabilitation

Structured exercise and education program with oxygen saturation monitoring during exercise. For individuals with pulmonary diseases including asthma, bronchitis, emphysema and COPD. Covered by most insurances.

- Meets year-round
- Physician referral required
- > **Durfee Union Complex, Fall River**
- > **St. Luke's Hospital, New Bedford**
- > **Tobey Hospital, Wareham**
- ☎ Call Jessica Nicolossi at **508-973-5435** for details.

New Parent / New Baby

Baby Café

A friendly and comfortable drop-in session for pregnant and breast-feeding mothers to learn more about breast-feeding. Peer support and one-on-one help from specially trained health professionals is available, including professional lactation support. No registration required.

- > **Center for Women's Health**
Tuesdays, 10:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.
☎ Call Patricia VanDenBerghe at **508-973-5445** for details.
- > **Healthfirst Family Care Center, Fall River**
Wednesdays, 10 a.m.–12 p.m.
☎ Call Gina Kiser, RN, at **508-973-7308** for details.
- > **Southcoast Obstetrics & Gynecology, New Bedford**
Thursdays, 4:30–6:30 p.m.
☎ Call Dr. Uma Hari at **508-973-2208** for details.

Breast-Feeding Basics

For families that are planning to breastfeed or exploring infant feeding options. Topics include the benefits of breast-feeding, techniques and positions, and the important benefits of contact with your baby. Expectant mothers and their partners are encouraged to attend before the birth of the baby. Please register at 18 to 20 weeks of pregnancy.

- > **Charlton Memorial Hospital**
☎ Call Gina Kiser, RN, at **508-973-7308** for details.
- > **St. Luke's Hospital, Knowles Auditorium**
☎ Call Patty VanDenBerghe, RN, at **508-973-5445** for details.
- > **Tobey Hospital**
☎ Call **508-273-4545** for details.

Breast-Feeding Support Group

A place to come for physical, mental and emotional support for breast-feeding and new mothers. The group will be facilitated by a nurse who is an Internationally Board Certified Lactation Consultant. No registration required. Drop-ins welcome.

- > **Rosebrook Medical Office Building**
First and third Friday, 10 a.m.–12 p.m.
☎ Call Julie Grady at **508-273-4060** for details.



Newborn Care Class

This one-time class offers a hands-on approach to learning the basics of caring for your newborn. Registration is required.

- > **Tobey Hospital**
Oct. 4 and Dec. 6;
6–8:30 p.m.
☎ Call Gina Kiser, RN, or Patty VanDenBerghe, RN, at **508-273-4545** for details.

Support Groups

Bereavement Support Groups

Southcoast offers on-going support groups for adults and children grieving the loss of a loved one at many convenient locations and times. All are free of charge.

- ☎ Call Lindsey Coe at **508-973-3227** for details on the groups listed below.

Children's Support Groups

- > **Boys & Girls Club of Fall River, Community Room**
First Tuesday of the month
Ages 6–13, 3:30–4:30 p.m.
Ages 14–18, 4:30–5:30 p.m.

Adult Support Groups

- > **Charlton Memorial Hospital, Multi-Purpose Conference Room**
(use main entrance)
Second Tuesday of the month
5:30–7 p.m.
- > **Tobey Hospital, Stillman Library**
(use main entrance)
Third Tuesday of the month
1–2:15 p.m.

Adult Child Loss Group

- > **St. Luke's Hospital, Library Conference Room** (use main entrance)
Third Tuesday of the month
5:30–7 p.m.

Widow & Widower Group

- > **Somerset Library, Shipyard Room**
Fourth Tuesday of the month
3:30–5 p.m.

Crohn's & Colitis Support Group

This group provides support to people living with Crohn's Disease and/or Colitis. Family members are also welcome. Sponsored by the Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America.

- > **Tobey Hospital, Cranberry Room**
☎ Call Melissa Bessey at **781-449-0324** for details.

Ostomy Support Group

For people with ostomies, their family members and friends. Meetings usually include an educational topic, and time for questions, discussion and sharing among group members in a confidential, non-threatening environment.

- > **Charlton Memorial Hospital, Mooney Room** (enter through the Centers for Cancer Care entrance, Prospect Street)
Fourth Friday, 2–3 p.m.
☎ Call Tina McDonald at **508-679-3131 x 27509** for details.
- > **St. Luke's Hospital, White Home Living Room**
Third Wednesday, 3–4 p.m.
☎ Call Lisa Cyr at **508-973-5550** for details.



For a complete listing of all of Southcoast's classes and events, visit southcoast.org/events.

Pregnancy & Infant Loss: Parents Enduring Grief

Our mission is to provide parents who have experienced a loss with a safe haven where they can come to journey through their grief, mourn their loss without judgment, and honor and celebrate the life of their child, all the while being supported by other parents who have experienced similar circumstances of loss.

- > **St. Luke's Hospital, Library Conference Room**
Third Wednesday
6:30–8 p.m.
☎ Call Kelly Aguiar, MSW, LCSW, at **508-973-5509** for details.

Weight Loss Programs

Weight Loss Surgery Information Sessions

Learn about the option of weight loss surgery and have all your questions answered. Sessions take place monthly in Dartmouth, Fall River, Plymouth, Taunton and Wareham.
☎ Call **508-973-8610** for details.

Weight Management Program Information Sessions

Whether you're on your way to achieving your weight loss goals or you've already lost the weight and are set on keeping it off, Southcoast offers programs geared toward your success.

3 C's for Success aims to teach participants healthy food choices, behavior change and appetite awareness.

OPTIFAST® is a comprehensive weight management program that combines lifestyle education, meal replacement and medical monitoring to achieve significant results in weight loss.

Programs include one-on-one session with a Registered Dietitian, weekly group counseling sessions with weight monitoring, monthly group counseling as part of ongoing weight maintenance and helpful handouts and education modules.

- > **North Dartmouth:** Oct. 19
- > **Wareham:** Nov. 17
- > **Fall River:** Dec. 12
- ☎ Call **508-525-3114** to register.

The Best Start in Life

Southcoast's maternity services provide sophisticated, comfortable care for mothers, infants and their families

Michael Pepi, MD, joined Southcoast Health as Chief of Obstetrics & Gynecology for Southcoast Health in August. In his role, Dr. Pepi will provide both direct patient care and medical leadership for the Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology. Dr. Pepi comes to Southcoast Health with 28 years of experience, including serving as the Chief of Obstetrics & Gynecology over the past 10 years at Memorial Hospital in Rhode Island.

Health+: You have been practicing for about 30 years. In that time, have you seen patient expectations change?

Dr. Pepi: There has been a dramatic change in expectations over the past three decades. Patients usually have a great deal to say about how they want their delivery to be — ranging from the music they want playing, to who they want in the room and more. Each patient can have different expectations and desires for their delivery. Environment matters more now. The environment needs to be pleasant and the patient needs to have some control over their experience.

Pain relief or control, of course, also influences the experience. With the use of epidural anesthesia, women are able to enjoy the birthing experience more.

H+: How do you help meet those expectations?

Dr. Pepi: In the birthing process, there are two patients: the mother and the infant. The experience for both must be positive and as free from anxiety as possible. My philosophy is to remain flexible as long as we are ensuring the safety of both patients. This would mean continuous monitoring by a physician or midwife.

H+: What impact has the internet had on women's experience and expectations while pregnant?

Dr. Pepi: When a woman becomes pregnant or is planning to become pregnant, she usually wants information. Friends and family members might share their experiences, which might be positive or negative. And these days, most people rely on the internet for information. Sometimes using the internet can be more confusing than helpful because there is so much conflicting material. Some of the information is accurate, but some might be inaccurate, so there may be some misunderstandings.

As medical professionals, part of our job is to help patients get accurate information and have all of their questions answered so they understand what to expect.



Michael Pepi, MD

H+: Southcoast's philosophy has been to not just focus on the new mother and infant, but to provide what is called family-centered care. How do you think this philosophy is beneficial?

Dr. Pepi: Our primary patients will always be the mother and the infant, and their health, safety and well-being will always come first. But babies are born into families that can include a father or partner, other children and extended family members who can be involved in caring for the infant. It is important that we create a comfortable environment for the entire family so that those important first days after birth, when bonding occurs, are the best they can be, education can take place and questions can be answered. The overall goal is to ensure the baby — and family — have the best start possible.

For an extended version of this interview with Dr. Pepi, visit southcoast.org/health+. To learn about maternity services at Southcoast, visit southcoast.org/maternity or call 844-744-5544.