

Wednesday, September 28, 2005

High Risk

Today was the first real day of my Obstetrics and Gynecology rotation. OB/GYN is something that is high on my list of potential careers, so I am very excited about the next 6 weeks. I am starting with 2 weeks (well, more like 1.5) on High-risk obstetrics, which as I learned today, could also be called "Sadder OB." The moms and/or babies have more issues, and as a result, you don't always end up with the result that we all imagine when we think of delivering babies. Happy mom, teary eyed dad, rosy fat baby bundled up like a little burrito in the bassinete. I saw a stillborn baby today. This baby was a twin. The other was healthy, this one was known to have an abnormality that is often fatal immediately after birth. The first baby came out yelling and turned a happy baby color right away. This kiddo was angelically perfect in every way. The room feels alert and energetic when a happy, yelling, healthy baby comes into the world. There is a buzz, and even the tough attendings will coo and sigh. The vibe totally changed for the next little munchkin, a silence fell over all of the doctors, residents and med students as they pulled the much smaller twin out. The fourth year med student valiantly suctioned, and we all were silent, as if willing this tiny creature to do something to break our hush. Almost reluctantly, the attending broke the silence to talk to the mom, telling her that the things we saw on ultrasound before the baby was born were visible on the baby now. She told her that she wasn't sure about a heart beat. The mom and dad began to cry. Although they were prepared, they were hoping that their baby would live for a few hours so that they could spend some family time together. Looking back on the fetal tracings, we realized that what were seen as two baby hearts beating was just the one, and that the little, sick twin was probably not alive when the mom came to the hospital today. Was it worse for the family this way, or easier to lose something you never saw and only felt moving? Would an aggressive monitoring have caused little baby to be born alive? Would it matter? I wish I could have spent more time with them, as a fly on the wall, to see how they managed their grief at the loss of one, but joy at the health of another baby.

Posted by Mia in Medical School at 20:30

Thank goodness they have one healthy little one, at least...a stillborn baby has to be one of the saddest things in the world. All that promise, all those months of waiting to welcome it, and then it's just gone. And I wonder if the child who lives might have a sense of survivor's guilt when he learns he had a twin who didn't make it.

Anonymous on Sep 28 2005, 23:42

Hang in there. Sorry your first day was so up and down. It is not all that way. We still do a lot of happy things in high risk ob. I think they are hiring there in MFM. Are they good people?

Anonymous on Sep 29 2005, 21:19

Aggressive monitoring to cause a live birth in a baby who has an often fatal defect? I think not. That to me, feels like more pain than a stillbirth.

Anonymous on Oct 1 2005, 12:58