Neonatal Care at Soroka Medical Center

Background

The Neonatal Department at Soroka Medical Center serves the one million residents of the Negev. It is the busiest and one of the leading neonatal departments in Israel.

More than 15% of all newborn infants have serious medical problems requiring intensive or special care. In the sole medical center serving the entire southern region of Israel, the Soroka Neonatal Intensive and Special Care units care for several thousand infants per year.

As the only medical center in the Negev, our mission is to serve the entire population that depends on us. Not being able to do so is simply unacceptable. The physical conditions of the existing Neonatal Department, built in the 1980's, are outmoded and no longer sufficient or appropriate. At times, babies in need of neonatal intensive care must be sent far to other parts of the country as free beds are not available due to lack of space. The unit was built with the then most modern concept of penetration of daylight through windows and glass bricks in the ceiling. During the War in Gaza and repeatedly since then, this has become a dangerous trap.

When under threat or attack, the neonatal team is forced to immediately evacuate all new mothers and infants from the Neonatal Department to protected quarters. While there is risk in moving premature babies, the risk of injury or worse from missiles is intolerable. We have been forced to evacuate and move the unit repeatedly as Beer Sheva and Soroka have repeatedly come under missile attack.

Neonatal Department Staff

The Neonatal Department staff includes 8 senior neonatologists, 5 pediatricians in-training, and 80 nursing and support personnel. The unit’s guiding principles are to place emphasis on the infant's health and safety, engage parents' maximum involvement, and ensure proper preparation of the family to assume responsibility for the care of their infant.
The Need

There is urgent need to construct a missile-proof facility in accordance with the security dictates of the area and to increase the number of beds from the current existing 58 beds to the 88 needed, responding to the increase of population in the area.

The Goal

To expand and protect the neonatal care facilities to care for all infants born to the families of the entire southern half of Israel, providing them with medical care of the highest standards in a family-centered approach pioneered at Soroka Medical Center. The expanded and protected facility will allow medical staff to provide the excellent care needed to best nurture these newest Israelis, these most vulnerable infants and their families.

Donation and Donor Recognition

This urgent and important project will be of major proportions. The new Neonatal Care Center will include an area of 5,500 square meters (more than 59,000 square feet).

The total cost of the new expanded and protected facility will be $20,000,000.

The new Neonatal Care Center can be named by the donor for a gift of $10,000,000, with matching funds provided by Soroka Medical Center.

Naming of significant components of the Neonatal Care Center will also be possible. These will include first and of foremost priority the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), as well as treatment and procedure rooms, open bay incubator areas, pharmacy, laboratory, family rooms and more.
Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU)

The Neonatal Department at Soroka Medical Center is the largest neonatal department in Israel. It includes 58 beds of which 24 are Neonatal Intensive Care beds.

As the only tertiary care hospital for the entire southern half of Israel, with a population of more than a million people, more than 16,000 babies are born at Soroka each year. Approximately 2,600 need some degree of special care. Of these, 600 infants each year need care in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, with more than 200 babies born weighing less than 1500 grams (3 lbs 5 oz) - some as tiny as 500 grams at birth - and with a high prevalence of complicated neonatal conditions needing sophisticated medical care often including complex neonatal surgery.

The Neonatal Department at Soroka provides care to a very diverse population from a broad range of ethnic, socioeconomic, cultural and religious backgrounds. This also presents a challenge far beyond the aspects of purely medical issues which we face.

The natural growth of the population as well as the strategic transfer of Israel Defense Force training bases to the Negev has increased the number of deliveries from 13,000 in 2012 to more than 16,000 in 2015. As of the result of this growth, the Department is no longer able to provide care for all babies in need and as a result mothers or babies increasingly need to be transferred to medical facilities in other parts of the country, far from their natural networks of support.

This displacement at a sensitive and often critical time is simply unacceptable, especially as some of these infants need care for as long as 4 - 6 months. Further, the majority of the population we serve is from a low income background and transfer of the mother or infant to a remote hospital is also a financial burden, often causing significant difficulties for the entire family, including potential loss of employment and difficulty caring for other family members.

There is urgent need to increase the number of beds in the Neonatal Department overall and most especially in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit in order to provide care for all those in need. The new Department is planned to include 88 beds, of which 38 will be dedicated to Neonatal Intensive Care.

Due to the sensitive security situation in the region and as a result of the medical center being targeted and coming under attack when missiles are directed at Beer Sheva, the NICU then has to be evacuated to safe shelters.
as the present Department is not protected against missiles. Only by immediately evacuating the NICU we can provide a safe environment for the babies - the hospital's tiniest and most fragile patients - for the staff to continue working under all conditions, and for the families.

This evacuation happens whenever there is escalation of the security situation on the southern front. Each evacuation puts all infants under enormous risk of harm as moving the infants and all of the sensitive life-support equipment to which each baby is attached presents a great risk for tiny babies. Since Operation Cast Lead in 2009, we have been forced to evacuate the Department and Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and move the infants for whom we care multiple times. Our plans call for the new Neonatal Care Department and its Intensive Care Unit to be housed in a modern and fully missile protected facility.

The new Neonatal Intensive Care Unit can be named for a gift of $5,000,000, with matching funds provided by Soroka Medical Center.

A Bit More about Our Department

The Neonatal Department was the first neonatal unit in Israel complying with the demanding international standards of ISO 9001, ensuring the most advanced medical treatment.

Numerous scientific publication originate in the work of the physicians in our department, published in the most prestigious medical journals such as Journal of Pediatrics and the New England Journal of Medicine. National and international collaboration is also part of the intense academic work that is done in our department. About 200 medical students receive training in our department including students from the Medical School of Ben-Gurion University as well as students from Medical School for international Health a joint program of BGU with several universities in the US.

Since 2006 the medical and nursing staff of the NICU, together with the Israeli Foreign Ministry and the Alliance for Global Good, has been involved in a pioneering program improving neonatal care in Ghana. This project has received international recognition for its unique comprehensive sustainable approach to neonatal care.

The new 88 bed Neonatal Department with 38 intensive care beds will be built with facilities of the highest standard of design allowing for family centered care as well as the most advanced neonatal technologies. This facility will provide state of the art and safe care for all newborns in the Negev.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposal and request
Soroka Medical Center

Soroka Medical Center is among Israel’s largest and most advanced hospitals, and the country’s busiest. Soroka is the only major medical center in the entire Negev, serving a population of more than one million inhabitants, including 400,000 children, in a region that accounts for 60% of the country’s total land area. Soroka serves as the teaching hospital of the Ben-Gurion University Medical School, whose Faculty of Health Sciences is located on the hospital campus, as well as the Medical School for International Health.

On par with leading international institutions, Soroka is a recognized specialist in areas including early detection and treatment of breast cancer using minimally invasive procedures; revolutionary treatment of myocardial infarction involving genetic engineering; non-invasive removal of malignant tumors; leading research in the development of skin cell transplants; trauma rehabilitation of children and adolescents; pediatric infectious diseases; and much more.

Each year, Soroka cares for more than 500,000 outpatient and clinic visits, 200,000 emergency cases, 80,000 hospitalizations fill its 1,100 beds, over 32,000 surgical procedures are performed, and more than 16,000 babies are born. Its neonatal and pediatric departments provide family-centered intensive care with world-class survival rates.

Soroka’s Trauma Unit is the largest and busiest in Israel, always on call, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Soroka serves as the regional trauma center for victims of terror and for all Israel Defense Force bases in and near the Negev. This need is unfortunately constant and increasing, most recently in light of the ongoing security situation in areas bordering Gaza.

Soroka Medical Center stands at the forefront of medical progress, and is currently upgrading and enhancing research capabilities and the healthcare it provides. Soroka’s staff is dedicated to advancing research and to providing the best medical and emergency care, while treating the patient as a whole human being.