

TeleHealth Allows Moms to See Their NICU Babies for the First Time

TeleNICU b-roll **1:57**

Imagine having to deliver your baby prematurely and then having your own complications during birth sending you to the Intensive Care Unit and your baby to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. It could be days before you're able to see or touch your child for the first time. It's in these cases that [OSF HealthCare Children's Hospital of Illinois](#) is finding new ways to connect parents with their newborns who require neonatal intensive care.

The NICU at OSF Children's Hospital in Peoria teamed up with the [OSF Innovation](#) TeleHealth Division in March 2016 to implement the TeleNICU program which brings moms and their babies together using telehealth technology.

TeleNICU-Connie Davis-1 **:26** **...baby even."**

"This gives them the opportunity to visualize their baby and see who is actually caring for their child over in the NICU," said Connie Davis, Nurse at OSF HealthCare Saint Francis Medical Center on the Obstetrics-Acute floor. "So they can communicate with them and just get a feel for what's going on and they feel like they can actually start that bonding process because they have not actually been able to hold their baby or put eyes on their baby even."

Davis says giving moms the ability to see and hear their babies could even help them produce a better milk supply in preparation for breastfeeding in the future.

31-year old Michelle from Chillicothe recently had to deliver her baby, Veida (VAY-duh), via C-section about two and a half weeks early because the child had complications in utero. She was excited to see her baby using a secure computer tablet.

TeleNICU-Michelle **:26** **...I'm here."**

"Being in the NICU, she's obviously in another building, not nearby, not in a nursery," said Michelle. "So, for me having a C-section, having to have transport or someone with me to take me to go see her—it was nice to be able to pop in, check on her and not have to worry about when I get to go or if it's going to affect anything the nurses might have to do for myself and my care while I'm here."

Since the TeleNICU program's inception, there have been about 85 cases where the tablet computers were used. Use of the tablets has recently expanded to [OSF HealthCare St. Joseph Medical Center](#) in Bloomington to test the telehealth equipment at a distance and to comfort families who had premature and sick babies transferred to Peoria while they had to stay behind.

Nurse Connie Davis has seen firsthand how valuable the technology can be to mothers.

TeleNICU-Connie Davis-2 **:17** **...see that."**

“I know I did have a mother who had been out of it for several days over in the ICU and then I was able to take the iPad over to her and help her make that connection and it was tearful to see that,” said Davis.

The TeleHealth team is applying for funding to purchase a camera system for every bed in the NICU at OSF Children’s Hospital. The system under consideration would give families a 360-degree view of their babies, 24 hours a day from any location. There would also be an opportunity for parents to share a web link with expanded family members who want to virtually visit newborns. Privacy options could shut down video while patient care is taking place.

The overall goal is to expand the TeleNICU program across the OSF Healthcare System. For more information on donating to this program, visit www.osfhealthcarefoundation.org or contact the OSF HealthCare Foundation at (877) 574-5678.