

## PREGNANCY AND BIRTH

PROMOTIONAL FEATURE

## The best care for women – and their babies

St Vincent's Private Hospital is currently embarking on a state-of-art redevelopment. Dr Lionel Steinberg shares with **Rebecca Davis** how new mothers and their babies will benefit.

In his 38 years as an obstetrician and gynaecologist, Dr Lionel Steinberg has delivered over 25,000 babies – and 31 of those years have been spent bringing new life into the world at Melbourne's St Vincent's Private Hospital.

"I'm one of the very few people invited to the very first birthday party," jokes Dr Steinberg.

"I'm privileged for being there, and that's what makes my job so good."

"I enjoy birthing and the joy of bringing life into the world – both from the couple's point of view, and from my own personal point of view."

Originally hailing from South Africa, Dr Steinberg has earned an esteemed reputation – in the Jewish and broader communities – for his women-centred care ethos. His focus is on empowering and supporting women to achieve low-intervention, vaginal births, and low caesarean rates.

Reflecting on how his practice has changed over the decades, Dr Steinberg says modern life and instant gratification have propelled a rushed mindset.

"Obstetrics isn't instantaneous. On average, labour is 14-16 hours for a first-time mother – it's not the 15 minutes we see on TV."

Having witnessed the rate of caesarean sections increase from around

12-15 per cent 30 years ago, to 50 per cent today – "almost half our practice is VBAC (vaginal birth after caesarean section) now" – Dr Steinberg underscores the importance of patients being well informed.

"Patients need to understand what they're getting. They need to work out what they want, and they need to do that before seeking the services of an obstetrician."

On assisting couples in navigating through such an emotionally heightened "extremely difficult time", Dr Steinberg reflects, "[It's the] reassurance from the practitioner, from the midwives in my practice that guides my patients through it."

Dr Steinberg is also well known for safely delivering complex births, particularly VBACs, breaches and twin pregnancies.

And it is precisely this diversity of cases that makes him look to St Vincent Private Hospital's redevelopment with great enthusiasm.

The new 12-level tower is currently being built in Fitzroy, anticipated to be complete by the end of 2024.

Aside from four advanced operating theatres, expanded intensive care unit, radiology, neurology, neurosurgery and heart and lung services, new mothers can expect state-of-the-art facilities and care.

On levels three and four of the new tower, luxurious and spacious birthing suites will provide the perfect environment for parents to welcome their new baby while maintaining a specific focus on complex care of mother and baby.

"From a private hospital point of view, you can't get a better facility," says Dr Steinberg. "Because St Vincent's is a general hospital, it's got all the back-up if you require; all obstetric services that you need, back-up of intensive care, back-up of blood bank, back-up of anaesthetic services and back-up of all other specialists that you might need for illness that might occur during your pregnancy that's not obstetric. For example, if



New maternity suite at St Vincent's Private Hospital.

you get acute appendicitis during your pregnancy. Everything's in the same building."

Level four will also offer a special care nursery that better equips the team of midwives, neonatal nurses, obstetricians and paediatricians to care for premature or unwell babies from 32 weeks gestation.

The special care nursery may often be a baby's first bedroom, and the idea is to create a womb-like feeling of comfort, safety and quiet. The interior design considers the sensitivity of premature babies and their parents through softly curved edges, warm pink and minty green tones and rounded feature wall lights, giving a safe and friendly feel.

This, coupled with an adult intensive care unit, means that on the rare occasions where mother and baby both need immediate specialist care, they will remain in the same location.

"Mothers never think they'll end up in intensive care; they worry about the babies," says Dr Steinberg.

"But in fact, the chances of a mother

landing in intensive care, is probably the same risk or higher than your baby, because the women we're looking after tend to be older and they've got more medical conditions, so they're more likely to need other medical services as obstetric services."

A beautifully landscaped, spacious courtyard garden will also provide a welcoming space for families and visitors to share special time together.

"In terms of total obstetrics and gynaecological care, it's a very good set-up at St Vincent's. Obstetric practices are set up well and [while we have our individual practices], obstetricians work together here. They help each other if there are problems, or we need to discuss cases. I think that's very important.

"We work together as a team."

St Vincent's Foundation is inviting families to create a living legacy by naming the building or rooms and spaces within the new building. For more information on this or how to become members of the Donor Care Program, contact Cameron Smith, on 0431 079 906 or [cameron.smith@svha.org.au](mailto:cameron.smith@svha.org.au)



Obstetrician and gynaecologist, Dr Lionel Steinberg.

Discover an exclusive opportunity to feature your family's name in St Vincent's new hospital tower.

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