

# Texas Medical Center NEWS

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Texas Medical Center News

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## The Perkins Family Six Pack 'Ordinary Couple' now has an 'Extraordinary' Family



**PERKINS PREMIES**—The Perkins sextuplets were born April 26 at Texas Children's Pavilion for Women. (Photos by Allen Kramer)

By KATHLEEN SMITH  
Texas Medical Center News

For Lauren and David Perkins of Pearland, Texas, having a child was a one-in-a-million possibility. When they found out they were having six children, they discovered how much more extraordinary the odds were: one in 4 million, to be exact. Those are the chances of ever conceiving sextuplets.

Lauren and David, who were unable to conceive naturally, were

on a mission trip to Nicaragua last summer, when the pastor of the church they were visiting asked the congregation to pray for the Perkins' infertility issues.

David said the attention made them a little uncomfortable, but the memory seemed to stay at the forefront of their minds.

Lauren found out she was pregnant three months later. She thought, due to fertility treatment, that twins or triplets were a good



**PROUD PERKINS PARENTS**—David and Lauren Perkins spoke publicly for the first time May 2 about the birth of their sextuplets at Texas Children's Pavilion for Women. The couple was joined by doctors who gave additional information on the delivery and care of premature multiples.

possibility—but was in complete shock at the news of sextuplets.

"I never would have believed it until I saw it with my own eyes on the scan," Lauren said.

Stephen Welty, M.D., head of neonatology at Texas Children's Pavilion for Women and professor of pediatrics at Baylor College of Medicine, said Lauren was an outstanding patient,

(See BABIES page 17)

## MITIE Study Suggests

## New Surgeons should Slow Down when Learning New Tasks

By LISA MERKL  
University of Houston

Completing a task quickly is often thought to be a sign of efficiency and skill.

However, speed may not always be desirable for new surgeons who are learning surgical procedures, said Barbara Bass, M.D., an authority in surgical education and director of MITIE, the Methodist Institute for Technology, Innovation and Education at The Methodist Hospital.

(See SLOW page 18)



**STRESS BUSTERS**—Ioannis Pavlidis, Ph.D., of the University of Houston, and Barbara Bass, M.D., of The Methodist Hospital, completed a three-year study that found the more stressed new surgeons are when learning new procedures, the faster they work and thus, the more likely they are to make mistakes. (Photo by Thomas Campbell)

## NURSING HITS A HIGH NOTE

Country music singer and former nurse Naomi Judd, third from left, visits with Patricia Starck, D.S.N., right, dean of The University of Texas School of Nursing at Houston, and Dr. Denton Cooley and his wife Louise at the nursing school's annual PARTNERS fundraising lunch, where Judd was keynote speaker. The event, held April 26 at the River Oaks Country Club, was attended by nearly 450 guests, and raised about \$225,000 for nursing school scholarships and programs. (Photo by Kim Coffman)



# Babies

(Continued from page 1)

and by following the orders of her OB/GYN, Robert Carpenter, M.D., the Perkins experienced this miracle birth.

"On both sides of Fannin, in the West Tower, and here in the new Pavilion for Women, miracles happen every day," Welty said.

"This new facility makes this event even more exciting," agreed Charles Hankins, M.D., a neonatologist at Texas Children's Pavilion for Women, Texas Children's Hospital's West Campus chief medical officer and associate pro-

fessor of pediatrics-neonatology at Baylor College of Medicine.

"This may not happen again during my career," said Hankins, who never before had delivered sextuplets but once had delivered a set of quintuplets.

Lauren first met with Carpenter when she was nine weeks pregnant and they developed her pregnancy plan.

The plan included enrolling in the Program for Multiples at Texas Children's Fetal Center. Because carrying multiples is so different than carrying one baby, there are different guidelines and care that should be followed. The program was developed to help manage these higher-risk pregnancies – and ultimately achieve better outcomes. Services include consult-

ing with genetic counselors from Baylor College of Medicine to verify if there are inherited risk factors, fetal imaging using an enhanced ultrasound, a personalized nutrition plan created by a registered dietician – because moms carrying multiples need to eat differently than moms carrying singles – and a maternal-fetal medical assessment reviewing possible obstetrical complications with a customized guide with critical appointment reminders for the pregnancy's duration, such as follow-up ultrasounds and diabetes checks.

At 14 weeks, Lauren had a cerclage, or a stitch, placed on her cervix to keep it from opening and the babies from delivering too early. In addition to that, at 18 weeks, Lauren was put on bed rest.

"A woman who can go to bed for 12 weeks is a woman who is determined to be a mom," said Hankins.

At 23 to 24 weeks, the obstetrician and neonatologists started dialoguing about possible birth scenarios. The teams even conducted two birth simulations to prepare for the six-pack's arrival – one in the middle of the night. Nobody wanted to be caught off guard.

On April 23, it was time for the babies to emerge from the safety of Lau-

ren's womb. At 30 weeks, one day gestation, she delivered via cesarean section. There were 35 people in the delivery room, including neonatologists, obstetricians, nurses and anesthesiologists. Each baby had a dedicated medical team, and because of simulations, every person knew their role and could assess each as they were born. All six babies were delivered in just four minutes.

The "six pack" included three boys: Andrew, Benjamin and Levi and three girls: Allison, Caroline and Leah. They weighed between 1 pound 10 ounces and 2 pounds 15 ounces.

It was little Leah who decided the birthday for the babies, Hankins said. Some health problems that she experienced in utero forced the delivery.

"In a way, she's the boss," he said. "She may end up being the boss long term."

Five of the six babies were taken off ventilation within 72 hours, which in and of itself is a tremendous milestone for such tiny tots. They were then placed on continuous positive airway pressure, or CPAP, machines – the same kind that adults with sleep apnea use. At press

(See BABIES next page)

## Memorial Hermann Partners with Child Advocacy Center

In a newly formed partnership, Memorial Hermann is now providing medical forensic examinations for children who are believed to have been physically or sexually abused and are being helped at Children's Safe Harbor, a Conroe-based, free children's advocacy center.

Exams are conducted by forensic nurses, highly skilled registered nurses who have been in practice more than two years and completed more than 200 hours of additional education in caring for adult and pediatric sexual assault patients.

"This partnership is a dream come true," said Victoria Constance, Ph.D., executive director of Children's Safe Harbor. "Our children have been so blessed to be seen by such a compassionate and skilled medical team. Memorial Hermann's nursing staff not only support our children Monday through Friday onsite at our clinic, but they also attend our bi-monthly case review and coordination meetings."

"A comprehensive medical examination following the sexual assault of a child serves many purposes," said Sally Awad, M.D., medical director of Memorial Hermann's forensic nurse response team. "Most importantly, it attends to the child's physical, mental, and emotional health care needs. Secondly, it provides documentation of injuries that may be present, evaluates exposure to sexually

transmitted infections, and forensic evidence is collected when applicable." ■

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# Slow

(Continued from page 1)

Bass and fellow researchers have completed a three-year study that found a correlation between how fast new surgeons complete a surgical task during training, and how stressed they are while completing the task.

The researchers found that although the surgeons were novices, they completed surgical tasks such as suturing and cutting as quickly as more experienced surgeons.

"This is counterintuitive, because you would expect common sense to tell a novice to be more careful and slow down in an effort to reduce errors," said Ioannis Pavlidis, Ph.D., director of the Computational Physiology Laboratory

at the University of Houston.

Pavlidis and colleagues developed a thermal facial mapping technique that measures new surgeons' stress based on facial perspiration – the more perspiration, the greater the stress.

The higher the stress level in new surgeons, the researchers found, the faster the new surgeons performed tasks.

"When presented with a chal-

lenging task," Pavlidis said, "the basic human instinct of survival mode kicks in and precipitates action, even if the speed of that action is counterproductive for the desired result."

He says if trainees could just slow down, their training time might be shortened and their experience enhanced.

The key, Bass said, is to reduce

stress levels during training.

"Reducing stress may reduce speed, which may reduce errors," she said.

The results of this study were published in *Scientific Reports*, the new open-access research publication from the Nature Publishing Group. See a video of this story at <http://youtu.be/LgnDyBQlFMQ>.

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## Babies

(Continued from page 17)

time, four babies were removed from the CPAP machines and now need no breathing assistance. Four babies were also weaned from their central lines that support nutrition and are completely

dependent upon breast milk.

Lauren said she is pumping as much as she can, but needs also to rely on donor breast milk while at the hospital and a combination of breast milk and formula once the babies go home.

Leah, who had surgery to repair a portion of her bowel April 31, may continue to have some health problems,

but is a "fighter." She was removed from her ventilator and placed on a CPAP machine, but continues being fed through an IV.

All babies continue to improve consistently.

"Leah may be at the bottom of the hill and have a lot higher to climb than the rest," said Hankins, "but there is no reason to doubt that she'll make it to the top."

David credits his wife's good health for carrying the babies as far as she did. It is typical – in this atypical situation – for sextuplets to be delivered at about 28 weeks. Athletic Lauren, who logged 40 to 50 miles a week in her running shoes, was able to go beyond that. However, it is also this hobby which doctors believe, in Lauren's case, may have contributed to infertility problems.

On average, the babies should expect to gain 0.5 ounce to 1 ounce per day. The doctors would like to see the babies weigh 4 to 5 pounds each when they go home. They typically shoot for the babies' original due date as a target "go home" date – which in this case is July 1. Of course, some may go home before that date and some after.

And waiting to greet the babies when they arrive home is their dog, Maggie.

Lauren said there are three cribs waiting at home for their new occupants. Two babies will occupy each crib until they are big enough to have their own. Then, when they are old enough, they will have a girls' room and a boys' room.

Until then, the Perkinses are taking it one day at a time. Lauren spent her first Mother's Day in a low-key way, just holding her babies and doing ordinary things that other moms may take for granted, like changing diapers, taking temperatures, wiping faces and any other things that the doctors and nurses would let her and her husband do.

"The emotion I feel most is gratitude," said David. "We're an ordinary couple chosen by God with an extraordinary responsibility and an extraordinary blessing." ■

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**3-bedroom, 2 bath, 2100 sq. ft.** Nice neighborhood, excellent condition, six miles to downtown and Galleria, big storage room at backyard, \$1,400/mo. **832/326-0623**

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**TMC area / Meyer Park.** 3-2-2. Large remodeled kitchen, 1,750 sq. ft., 10 minutes to TMC area, partial wood floors, \$1,300/mo. Plus deposit. Credit check required. **713/721-5120**

### CONDOMINIUMS FOR SALE

**TMC Area. Holly Hall Townhomes:** 2-2.5, \$120,000; **Riverwalk:** 2-2, \$128,900 or 1-1 + loft, \$107,000; **Fontainebleau:** 2-story, 2-1.5, \$113,000 or 1-1.5, \$93,500. **Cambridge Court:** 2-2, \$89,000. **Montreal Place:** 2-2, \$86,000. **One Montreal Place:** 2-2, \$88,000 or 2-1, \$72,000 or 1-1, \$65,000. **STEFANIE SHELTON PROPERTIES, 713/885-0100**

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