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## The Changing Face of Women's Health at St. Luke's OB/GYN

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St. Luke's Obstetrics & Gynecology Associates is a thriving women's practice purpose-built to meet the diverse needs of 21st-century patients. At fifteen syllables long, the name is a bit of a mouthful. But the focus of the entire practice comes down to one word: excellence.

Its current all-female team includes seven physicians, four mid-level care providers and three nurses. But what truly sets it apart is the team's commitment to staying in tune with their patients, from adolescents to women in menopause, and from women who are pregnant to those who are trying to conceive.

According to Dr. Jennifer Boyle, a physician at St. Luke's Obstetrics & Gynecology Associates, there is a shift happening in patient expectations. "Patients today are much more empowered. They have many more choices than they did in the past, from selecting a health system to choosing their individual physician. They also have access to much more information and are generally more informed about their health."

Dr. Claire Mallof, who recently joined the practice, said that demographics are also impacting the care experience. "As a population, the U.S. is aging. The baby boomers are a huge group, and they are just now moving into retirement. That, along with the trend of women delaying childbirth till their 30s or even 40s and a large influx of new millennial patients, has created a new care dynamic."

Add to that new dynamic the preference many women have to see a female care provider, and you have a recipe for a care evolution. "In general, the practice of medicine has gone from 'paternalistic' to 'egalitarian,'" said Dr. Boyle.

#### Newer advances in women's care

In addition to providing traditional OB/GYN services, St. Luke's Obstetrics & Gynecology Associates also has increased expertise in fertility services. All seven of their physicians provide fertility counseling, said Dr. Mallof, who has taken the lead in the area of fertility counseling for the clinic. What's more, the group is also consulting with specialist Phoebe Leonard, MD, FACOG, a board-certified reproductive

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for many older women. Said Dr. Mallof, "As they age, many women experience ongoing pelvic floor or incontinence issues. In the past, women had to choose between major surgery or 'just dealing with it.' But with today's latest minimally invasive techniques, with only a vaginal incision or several tiny abdominal incisions, we can go in and fix the issues without giant scars or excessive recovery times."

For women who are pregnant, St. Luke's physicians go the extra mile to be there for their patients' deliveries, if at all possible. "We are very loyal to our patients. We maintain a continuity of care with our patients, following them from office visits through birth."

#### **The practice of caring**

"For me, OB/GYN is a great combination of the things I love—delivering babies and providing life-long care for women," said Dr. Boyle. "For about half of our patients, we are their primary care physicians. Over time, you get to know them, what their family dynamics are, where they are in life. It's treating the whole person: I can care for you better if I know you better."

According to Dr. Boyle, the practice of obstetrics and gynecology is constantly evolving. And, that includes finding and applying better protocols. "We have excellent physicians. Our group comes from a pretty diverse background—in fact, every member of our team comes from a different medical program, which is unusual and a very positive attribute. Everything we do is evidence-based, reflecting the best practices of care."

For Dr. Mallof, that commitment to providing excellent patient care is a hallmark of their culture—and the culture of St. Luke's. "We want to continue to deliver the highest level of care. That's just who we are."

**BELOW: The current all-female team of physicians at St. Luke's OB/GYN (left to right) provide care to women of all ages: Dr. Claire Malloff, Dr. Melissa Miller, Dr. Elisabeth Revoir, Dr. Aimee VanStraaen, Dr. Judith Johnson, Dr. Jennifer Boyle and Dr. Susan Goltz**



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