

Making Sense of Centering

BY APRIL TISHER

There is another option to add to your list when considering your pregnancy healthcare. CenteringPregnancy is a type of group healthcare that provides a support system not found in traditional one-on-one care between a patient and provider. Although a Yale-educated nurse midwife originally developed the concept in the 1990s, it has been gaining popularity across the country and there are now six approved Centering sites in Florida.

Dr. Kay Roussos-Ross, Medical Director of CenteringPregnancy at the OBGYN Clinic at UF Health, explained that this approach to prenatal health is based on three main components: assessment, education and support. It is the support part of the group that makes it stand out.

With this healthcare model, groups of expectant moms are divided by gestational age with approximately 10 patients in each group. The members may be diverse in age, number of pregnancies, cultural and religious beliefs, and educational backgrounds. There are possible future plans for specific groups such as high risk or a teen group, but for now the diversity helps to foster discussions and enables the peers in the group to provide experience and personal knowledge to the other members. During the group sessions, the physician is a facilitator to discussions regarding the stages of pregnancy and related topics. It



▲ The CenteringPregnancy participants snack and discuss the many facets of pregnancy.



▲ A local group of women currently participating in the CenteringPregnancy model.

is not a class or lecture, but is an agenda-based discussion group that allows for more in-depth conversations about topics. The group's appointments follow a normal obstetric schedule, however, since the appointment times are from 1½ – 2 hours long, it allows time for the group to ask questions and get feedback from the physician as well as others who are also experiencing the same types of things. Topics such as safety concerns, family dynamics, prenatal complications, depression, old wives' tales and cultural traditions are discussed, along with traditional gestationally appropriate information. Each patient still receives individual physical assessments during the first part of the group appointment while other group members assist in self-care procedures such as taking weight and blood pressure measurements.

Dr. Roussos-Ross feels that part of the beauty of this model is that "it empowers women by allowing them to be direct participants in their own health care. Instead of things being done to them, they have control."

Anytime the patient has a problem or complications outside of the norm, they are evaluated and seen at follow-up appointments just as they normally would during traditional obstetric care. The insurance billing is also done the same way as individual care, so that is not an obstacle for those choosing this healthcare model.

While this style of care is not for everyone, CenteringPregnancy is for those who feel they would benefit from a group of peers during pregnancy and possibly after as well. The hope is that these women will continue to meet when their babies are born to guide one another through the postpartum and newborn stage and beyond. *



For more information about CenteringPregnancy, visit the website at Centeringhealthcare.org.