

C-sections: The operation can be life-saving

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Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, questioning why the cesarean birth rate has jumped during the past few decades and what can be done to safely lower it to the benefit of women, who often experience longer recovery periods, a increased likelihood of complications in future pregnancies and other disadvantages after the surgery.

Contributing factors

Cesareans can be life-saving procedures in some cases, but the WHO recommendation for the optimal C-section rate is important. It indicates that among health providers who have a rate higher than approximately 10 to 15 percent, there is no evidence to support that it is beneficial for either mothers or infants, according to Dr. Aaron Caughey, who is chairman of the department of obstetrics and gynecology and associate dean for women's health research and policy at the Oregon Health and Science University.

Maybe the high rate "is preventing bad things from happening, but we don't really have any evidence to support that," he said, which leads to suspicion there are thousands of babies being born through C-sections who don't need to be.

When sorting through the factors contributing to high cesarean rates, the primary one seems to be pressure from the medical profession's lawyers, Caughey said.

As of 2011, according to the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists,

more than 90 percent of OB-GYNs had been sued for malpractice at least once during their career, with an average of 2.7 claims per ob-gyn. Claims related to a neurologically impaired infant made up 30.5 percent of the obstetric claims, and of those, 49 percent were closed with some payment made to the plaintiff, "either settled with payment, closed by way of jury or court award, or closed through some other dispute-resolution mechanism," the association states. The average payment for claims involving a neurologically impaired infant was \$1,155,222.

Even years down the road, if an infant or child's neurological issues can be linked to their perinatal care or method of delivery, a doctor or hospital can be sued. It is much less likely a woman can or will sue because she had a C-section.

"It just doesn't happen," Caughey said. "People don't get sued for doing C-sections; they get sued for not doing C-sections."

As a response to the risk of liability claims and because of insurance costs and availability, doctors began making changes to their practice, including decreasing the number of high-risk obstetric patients, no longer offering or performing vaginal births after C-sections — referred to as VBACs — and increasing the number of cesarean deliveries, among others, according to the OB-GYN group.

Cesareans have become "very, very safe" to perform, which can lead to some doctors opting for that route sooner, rather than later, when complications arise to prevent

Birth methods in Clatsop County

According to State records, Cesarean births at Columbia Memorial and Providence hospitals made up more than 30 percent of births at each institution respectively in 2014. By comparison, the World Health Organization recommends the C-section rate should not be higher than 15 percent.

Year	CMH		Providence	
	Vaginal (%)	C-section (%)	Vaginal (%)	C-section (%)
2008	245 (68)	116 (32)	105 (70)*	46 (30)
2009	222 (70.5)	93 (29.5)	76 (71)*	31 (29)
2010	252 (72)*	96 (28)	92 (73.6)	33 (26.4)
2011	219 (66)*	113 (34)	109 (72.2)	42 (27.8)
2012	225 (68)*	106 (32)	111 (76)	35 (24)
2013	233 (72.4)	89 (27.6)	72 (76.6)	22 (23.4)
2014	211 (67.8)	100 (32.2)	76 (69.7)	33 (30.3)

*Vaginal includes vaginal births after cesareans.

Source: Oregon Health Authority

EO Media Group graphic

potential infant injuries and decrease liability, Caughey said.

The pressure from liability is often not predominantly economic, Caughey said. Doctors purchase insurance for the sake of being financially covered in such instances. Rather than an economic cost, it's "the act of being sued or having people around you being sued," Caughey said. Most doctors enter medicine "because they thought they could make a difference in people's lives," he said. To be dragged through the court system, negatively labeled and personally blamed for something bad happening — "that's pretty demoralizing," Caughey said.

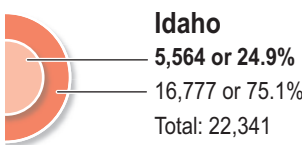
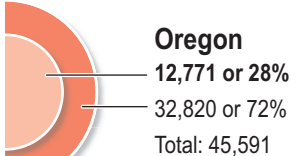
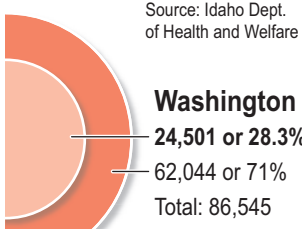
"It's probably one of the strongest negative outcomes a physician can experience," he added.

Paying the bill

As for other economic considerations, Caughey said,

2013 Northwest Cesarean birth rates compared

Legend: C-sec. (orange), Vaginal (red)



Alan Kenagal/EO Media Group

such as "patient preferences and practice variation among hospitals, systems and health care providers." Research has found maternal characteristics — such as age, weight and ethnicity — do not account fully for the increase in the C-section rate or its regional variations, the paper stated.

Local hospitals

Columbia Memorial Hospital Community Outreach Manager Paul Mitchell said the hospital was part of the national Partnership for Patients initiative through the Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems, which started in February 2013 and went

through 2014. The was aimed toward reducing patient harm by 40 percent and readmissions by 20 percent. The initiative had 10 focus areas, including birth-related injury to babies, Mitchell said.

Data from Oregon Health Authority shows the hospital's C-section rate increased from 2013 to 2014.

Mitchell said he believes the hospital has seen a decrease in its C-section rate.

"The hospital has reduced early elective deliveries by developing criteria for determining when delivering a baby before 39 weeks of gestation is medically warranted and educating patients on the benefits of allowing babies to gestate," Mitchell said.

At Providence Seaside Hospital, C-sections "are performed for many indications/reasons that may occur during pregnancy or labor, including the position of the baby and arrest of labor," Public Affairs Manager Paulette McCoy said. "C-sections can be scheduled procedures or unscheduled during the hospitalization, due to events that occur in labor."

Providence Seaside does not have a high-risk birthing facility, but collaborates with Providence St. Vincent and Northwest Perinatal Center for high-risk patients, McCoy said. CMH does offer care for women with high-risk pregnancies as part of its mission to provide care close to home, Mitchell said.

Mitchell and McCoy did not provide information on their hospitals' liability management frameworks.

Coming Thursday: What are the alternatives?

Power: A balloon from a nearby celebration caused the outage

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Seaside, Gearhart and parts of Warrenton were without power from about 4:40 to 10:20 p.m. as Pacific Power employees replaced the damaged equipment. The outage was caused by a metallic-skinned helium balloon that got away, according to Pacific Power.

"We found unmistakable red, white and blue Mylar shreds when we did the repairs the evening of July 4," Steve McGrorty said. He is Pacific Power's operations manager for the North Coast.

The balloon from a nearby celebration caused a main substation transformer to short circuit near Seaside Factory Outlet Center. Other equipment also was damaged on nearby poles.

"Balloons may seem like small things," Pacific Power Safety Manager Gene Morris said. "But when escaped balloons touch power lines or substations, even the smallest

amount of metal content material can conduct electricity. This can interfere with lines, causing power fluctuations and outages."

Emergency response

When the power went out, the city went into response mode and activated its Emergency Operations Center, headquartered at Seaside Police Department. All the city's department heads collaborated on how to collectively respond, Seaside Division Chief Chris Dugan said.

Usually a power outage is not a huge safety concern and does not activate the Emergency Operations Center, Seaside Police Chief Dave Ham said. Because it was Fourth of July, however, and there were throngs of people on the beach, it caused some concern.

"You have an enormous amount of people trying to get off a relatively small space, with limited avenues to flood out," Ham said.

Additionally, city staff

wanted to have a contingency plan for the anticipated, post-fireworks heavy traffic when no traffic lights were in operation.

As part of its response, the city got several large light structures to set up at key locations throughout town. Fortunately, power was fully restored at an optimal time — just as the fireworks show ended.

Before the show, the fire department also strategically stationed crews at three locations to respond to calls, since traffic becomes gridlocked once the fireworks are over, Dugan said.

Overall, during Fourth of July weekend, the department had 39 documented runs.

Because of how dry this summer has been, Dugan said, he expected more brush fires, but there were only two. He said he believes people were aware of the heat and dryness and stayed alert and conscientious to decrease the risk.



Courtesy of Pacific Power
The rather charred remains of the balloon that caused the power outage on the North Coast on the Fourth of July.

Unemployment rate rose in June

The Daily Astorian

Seasonally adjusted unemployment rates in northwest Oregon continued their upward march through June, according to data released Tuesday by the Oregon Employment Department.

Clatsop County

Clatsop County's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 5.5 percent in June, up a third of a percent from May but still down more than 1 percent from a year ago. Clatsop County had the ninth-lowest unemployment rate in Oregon in June, while matching the state-wide average and coming in just above the national average.

The county added 440 jobs in June, 70 fewer than the state expected. That left total non-farm payroll employment at 17,350, 260 more than the year prior for a growth rate of 1.5 percent.

The private sector added all 440 jobs in June, including 260 in leisure and hospitality; 90 in food manufacturing; 50 in other services; and 30 in retail trade.

Over the past year, leisure and hospitality have added 270 jobs; education and health services 80; state government 70;



*Preliminary, seasonally adjusted rates.
Source: Oregon Employment Department
Daily Astorian graphic

and professional and business services 60. Meanwhile, retail trade has shed 150 jobs; non-durable goods manufacturing 120; and local government, excluding education, 60.

Columbia County

Columbia County's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in June was 6.9 percent, up slightly from May but 1.5 percent lower than the year prior. The county has 29th-lowest unemployment rate of Oregon's 36 counties.

The county added no jobs in June, although the state had

expected a gain of 40. Total nonfarm payroll employment remained at 10,220, 250 more than a year prior, a growth rate of 2.5 percent.

The private sector lost 10 jobs in June, and government added 10. Retail trade added 30, the only industry to register a significant change.

Over the past year, the private sector has grown by 180 positions, including 140 in durable goods manufacturing and 60 in retail trade. Construction has cut 50 jobs, while governments have added 70, mostly at the state level.

Tillamook County

Tillamook County's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in June was 5.7 percent, up 0.4 percent from May but 1.3 percent lower than a year prior. It had the 11th lowest unemployment rate of Oregon, tied with Morrow County.

The county added 170 jobs, as the state projected. That left nonfarm payroll employment at 8,630, 20 more than the year prior, or a 0.2 percent growth rate.

The private sector added 160 jobs, including 120 in leisure and hospitality. Governments added 10 jobs.



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