

■ Mothers miss out on post-natal blues screening at private hospitals

Depression checks denied

By **Merryn Porter**

WOMEN who give birth at two of the three private hospitals in St George and Sutherland Shire are not screened for post-natal depression.

While it is common practice for women who give birth at public hospitals in the district to undergo pre-natal and post-natal screening for depression, only one private hospital in the area has a similar program.

This is despite the fact almost as many babies are born in the area's private hospitals as in the public sector.

Figures contained in *NSW Mothers and Babies 2006* released this year showed the three private hospitals in St George and Sutherland Shire that offered maternity services accounted for 3253 births that year, compared with 3470 births at public hospitals.

The Federal Government last year pledged its support for a national post-natal depression screening program and recently announced it would spend more than \$2 million over the next three years to support a hotline.

It also pledged \$5 million last year to raise community awareness of the illness and train health professionals who deal with expectant and new mothers.

Only Hurstville Community Private Hospital has an arrangement with private obstetricians to screen new mothers for depression at their post-birth check-up.

St George Private Hospital CEO Tracey Bur-

THOUSANDS HIT BY DESPAIR

The Post and Antenatal Depression Association (PANDA) released details to coincide with National Postnatal Depression Awareness Week, which showed 15,200 women and 8900 men in NSW suffer the condition each year with many cases undiagnosed.

A beyondblue survey showed half of all respondents thought it was normal for a pregnant woman to feel depressed and 25 per cent said post-natal depression would simply "go away".

The association's CEO, Belinda Horton, said post-natal depression was a quiet epidemic that was a big burden on the health system.

PANDA, 1300 726 306; beyondblue, 1300 22 4636, or beyondblue.org.au

ton said "no formal screening" currently took place, although midwives "actively monitor" new mothers while they're in hospital.

Ms Burton said private hospitals were at a disadvantage when it came to screening because women only gave birth at the maternity unit, with obstetricians handling pre-natal and post-natal care at their private practices.

However, she said the hospital held a one-day post-natal depression symposium earlier this year for obstetricians, pediatricians and maternity staff and would consider introducing a screening program.



Good start: Joan Murphy with daughter Emma Murphy and mother-craft nurse Sally Mullane at Hurstville Community Hospital where mums receive plenty of post-natal care. **Picture: Jane Dyson**

"I would hope that we would have something in place by early next year," she said.

Kareena Private Hospital CEO Tim Daniel said the maternity unit had measures in place to detect women at risk of developing post-natal depression.

He said about 30 per cent of midwives had undergone formal training in post-natal

depression while the nursing unit manager had recently attended a two-day course on the subject.

Mr Daniel said women identified as at risk of developing post-natal depression would be referred back to their obstetrician or would receive a follow-up phone call from maternity staff about a month after the birth.

For most women with a gynaecological disorder, there is a better treatment alternative

SWEC is one of the world leaders in keyhole surgery for women and one of Australia's most highly regarded endosurgery clinics and training centres.

It is an alarming fact that most women diagnosed with a gynecological illness are not made aware of the option of Laparoscopic or Endoscopic (keyhole) surgery. Keyhole surgery employs the latest developments in medical science and technology and involves a far less invasive method than traditional open surgery.

SWEC has been a world leader in Laparoscopic Surgery for nearly 15 years and treated over 10,000 patients in this time. They have published their results widely in the medical literature and run an internationally recognised research and training centre for Australian and overseas surgeons.

If you are considering a gynaecological operation why not give us a call.

Treatment for women where 'Less is more'

- less invasive than traditional surgery
- less time in hospital
- less pain
- less recovery time
- less scarring
- less disruption to the family
- less time off work

- Uterine bleeding disorders
- Hysterectomy
- Fibroids
- Pelvic floor and vaginal prolapse
- Urinary incontinence
- Endometriosis
- Ovarian cysts
- Reproductive or tubal surgery
- Severe period pain
- Adhesions
- Some early pelvic cancer



If you would like to discuss treatment options, call us today on

1300 498 448

swec.com.au



Sydney Women's Endosurgery Centre