

Fertility Specialist Restores Young Mother's Faith

When the snow began to fall on December 26, 2010, Sara McGowan and her husband, Joseph, were settling in and waiting for the blizzard to pass.

Sara, who was four months pregnant, suddenly did not feel right, so the couple braved the storm to go to the Emergency Department at Riverview Medical Center.

Sara had experienced a miscarriage. The next day, Sara underwent a dilation and curettage (D&C) — which removes the contents of the uterus in order to stop bleeding and prevent infection — with Kelly Hammond, M.D., Sara's obstetrician on staff at Riverview.

"I could cry talking about how caring the nurses were that day," Sara says. "They held my hand and comforted me during a really bad time and told me it would work out for me."

Finding Answers

Given that Sara's loss occurred in her second trimester, Dr. Hammond referred her to Miguel Damien, M.D., a board certified reproductive endocrinologist at Riverview. Dr. Damien diagnosed Sara with a septate uterus, the most common abnormality of the uterus that can cause high-risk pregnancy and a higher risk of miscarriage.

"With a septate uterus, a thick wall of tissue separates the uterus, causing poor blood supply, which causes the embryo to stick and leaves it unable to grow, increasing the chances of a

miscarriage. It appears normal on the outside but is abnormal in shape on the inside," Dr. Damien says.

A hysteroscopy — a surgical procedure in which the septum is removed and the uterus is reshaped — can help restore the uterus' reproductive function. "During a hysteroscopy, the septum is removed to restore blood flow and improve fertility," Dr. Damien says.

Forging Ahead

On February 4, 2011, Sara underwent surgery with Dr. Damien, and four months later, she was pregnant again.

"It was an emotionally tough pregnancy," Sara says. "I kept thinking the whole time that I would lose the baby again."

In January 2012, during one of the few snow storms of the season, Michael Karoly, M.D., an OB-GYN in practice with Dr. Hammond, helped Sara deliver a healthy 10-pound baby boy the couple named Jackson, their "miracle baby." Ten months later, shortly after Superstorm Sandy, the family learned they would be expecting a new addition. And in July 2013, Dr. Hammond delivered the couple's second child, Emily Faith.



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"I chose her name because it fit after everything we had been through. I obtained a lot of faith through all of our hardships," Sara says. "It took a lot to get pregnant, and thanks to the expertise of Drs. Hammond, Karoly, and Damien, my husband and I were able to start a family and begin life as parents."

By Caitlin Coyle

Sara McGowan, pictured here with 4-month-old Emily Faith, is a sixth-grade math teacher. She enjoys spending time with her family at home in their backyard.

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