

# ONE Patient's STORY



## A year after a hard start to life, UK obstetrician's baby makes a birthday visit to Kentucky Children's Hospital NICU



“Without the teamwork and support from (the staff at UK) we never would have made it through this time in our lives. ”

– Misty Thompson

Doctors and nurses flocked from every corner of Kentucky Children's Hospital on March 21, 2014, to give 1-year-old Connor Thompson birthday squeezes and kisses.

They noticed two tiny bottom teeth that would come in handy later that day for eating birthday cake, and they called him handsome as he revealed those new teeth while smiling for pictures. With so many adoring friends in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), it's no wonder this miracle baby was showing off with giggles, stomps and grins.

“If he's not smiling, then you know something's wrong,” said Misty Thompson, Connor's mom.

Just one year earlier, Thompson, an obstetrician and gynecologist based at UK Hazard Women's Health OB-GYN clinic, diagnosed herself with preeclampsia – a potentially dangerous condition affecting the mother's blood pressure that occurs in 5-8 percent of pregnant women.

After a weekend on bed rest, Thompson was only getting worse. She and her husband made the decision to come to UK Women's Health Obstetrics & Gynecology to be cared for by the Maternal Fetal Medicine specialists. Once admitted to the hospital, Thompson was diagnosed with a life-threatening

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condition known as HELLP syndrome. The syndrome stems from high blood pressure that causes blood clotting problems and other dangerous side effects. The only cure is delivery.

"I took my diagnosis really hard because I knew the dangers it held for me and my baby," Thompson said. "But the obstetrics staff was wonderful from start to finish, and they took great care of me."

After being placed on medication to help temporarily stabilize her blood pressure, Thompson and Connor were able to make it through the night. The next morning, Thompson's own boss, Maternal Fetal Medicine specialist Wendy Hansen, MD, delivered her tiny baby by cesarean section.

Born more than 3 months before his due date, Connor made his world debut at 1 pound 10 ounces and a mere 13.5 inches long. At six days old, Connor was diagnosed with a blockage in his bowels created by a twist in his lower intestine. KCH pediatric surgeon, Joseph Iacono, MD, surgically corrected the blockage. After the operation, Connor was attached to an ostomy bag larger than his infant body.

Three weeks later on March 16, Connor was diagnosed with patent ductus arteriosis (PDA), an opening in the fetal heart that's necessary while in the uterus, but should close soon after birth. Pressure from the PDA triggered bleeding in Connor's lungs, forcing him to undergo yet another surgery to close the vessel. The surgery was a success, and Connor's breathing tube was removed from his ventilator the next day after he showed his doctors and nurses he was strong enough to breathe without it.

During his 74-day stay in the KCH NICU, Connor received multiple blood transfusions, suffered a grade-I brain bleed and received around-the-clock care from dedicated doctors and nurses.

Finally strong enough to go home, Connor was released from the hospital in May 2013.

But the next five months would prove equally as challenging, as Connor faced three more bowel surgeries and was attached to a temporary ostomy bag until October 2013.

As a new mother in a complex and critical situation, Thompson realized the importance of having a compassionate team of doctors and nurses on her side.

"I look at things totally different now," she said. "I now know what it's like to be a scared mom. Without the teamwork and support from all the doctors, nurses – even the welcome desk staff who helped me when I was sobbing and helpless – we never would have made it through this time in our lives. These people will always play a special role in our lives."

Crystal Ferrell, RN, the KCH primary care nurse who worked with the Thompsons through Connor's NICU stay, made a special trip on her day off to KCH to celebrate Connor's birthday. When Connor was born, he was one of the tiniest babies Ferrell had ever seen.

"She was amazing," Ferrell said of Thompson. "She never was intimidating. She said, 'Tell me what you think?' She was the mommy at the bedside, not the doctor."

After saying hello to the many NICU doctors and nurses, the Maternal Fetal Medicine specialists and the staff who worked on his case, Connor joined family and friends for an all-star-themed first birthday party. Everyone at UK HealthCare and Kentucky Children's Hospital agreed the party's theme was fitting for a healthy, happy little boy who had fully recovered from a hard start in life.

For more information about  
UK Women's Health OB-GYN,  
call **800-333-8874** (toll free) or **859-257-1000**.

You can also visit our website at  
[ukhealthcare.uky.edu/obgyn](http://ukhealthcare.uky.edu/obgyn).