

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

From: Kasey McCulloch, Media Officer, Mercy Health

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A team effort to save baby Leo

At seven and a half months old, Leo Eleftheriou is crawling, giggling and sitting up; you would never know he nearly didn't make it safely home. But Leo's mum Anastasia remembers just how close she came to losing her precious little boy.

Anastasia was in the care of a private obstetrician and had an uneventful pregnancy until a routine ultrasound at 32 weeks detected an abnormal amount of fluid in Leo's stomach.

"Initially my doctor thought the fluid may have been the result of a genetic defect but that was quickly ruled out and I was immediately transferred to the Perinatal Medicine Clinic at Mercy Hospital for Women," Anastasia explained.

"At this stage my husband and I had no idea how bad things were and that Leo's life was in danger."

Anastasia and her husband Zenon, already parents to two-year-old Deon, were met at the hospital by Director of Perinatal Medicine Professor Sue Walker and her team including a geneticist, obstetric sonologist, genetic counsellor and midwife.

"We embarked on a series of investigations after quickly discovering that fluid was also starting to accumulate in other areas of Leo's body including around the heart," Prof Walker said.

"We did numerous tests but all of the results were turning up negative except for one that indicates the baby might be bleeding across the placenta into the mother's circulation but even this was a very low positive. However, it did give us a lead to follow."

Prof Walker and her team closely monitored Anastasia over the next few days. As Leo started to show signs of anaemia, they performed fetal blood sampling and a blood transfusion.

"It felt okay for a couple of days, I could feel Leo jumping around again but then I noticed there wasn't as much fetal movement and I told Sue I wasn't feeling right," Anastasia said.

The team performed another series of life-saving blood transfusions before deciding to deliver Leo safely into the care of the Neonatal Team due to his situation becoming unpredictable.

"Fetal-maternal haemorrhage is very rare and is usually a 'once off' event," Prof Walker said.

"Leo's situation was exceptional because the haemorrhage was continuing, causing the blood count to keep dropping, despite transfusion. I think we would have lost Leo if he hadn't been under such close surveillance and he hadn't had prompt and repeated interventions both day and night."

Leo spent two days in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit before being transferred to the Special Care

Nursery for three and a half weeks.

“The day we finally got to take Leo home - was the happiest day of our lives,” Anastasia said.

”He’s a perfectly normal, healthy baby: he smiles, he laughs and he’s cranky sometimes. He’s so independent and we are so grateful for the care we received at Mercy Hospital for Women.”

The Mercy Health Foundation Ball, which will be held on Saturday 20 May at the Sofitel in Melbourne, is raising money for Mercy Perinatal which strives to help bring more babies like Leo safely home.

Mercy Perinatal was officially launched in December 2016 and aims to support research and care for the most vulnerable and complicated pregnancies. Mercy Perinatal is currently working on developing a blood test to detect small babies who are at a disproportionate risk of stillbirth as well as a treatment for the potentially deadly pregnancy condition preeclampsia.

For more information, visit mercyhealth.com.au or mercyperinatal.com

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For interviews and photo opportunities, please contact:

Kasey McCulloch

Media Officer

Mercy Health

Ph: 8416 7521

Mobile: 0477 720 337

Email: KMcCulloch@mercy.com.au