

Building a Culture of Life in Women's Health Care

Read the story of
the Bora family on page 3



A newsletter of the Pope Paul VI Institute
for the Study of Human Reproduction

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Dr. Chris Stroud Lives out His Faith, Finds Success

AS A PRACTICING OB-GYN AND A RECENT CONVERT TO THE FAITH, Dr. Christopher Stroud of Fort Wayne, Indiana knew the Catholic Church's teaching that contraception was morally wrong, but he did not fully understand why. This all began to change one day after attending confession.

"As I was confessing my sins, I sort of mentioned in passing that I was an OB-GYN and prescribed contraceptives," Stroud says. "But I suddenly understood the seriousness of this when the priest placed his hand on my leg, gave me a concerned look and said I had to stop."

At the priest's referral, Dr. Stroud met with a fellow local physician, Dr. Patrick Holly, who suggested that the two of them read Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae Vitae* together.

Stroud recounts reading *Humanae Vitae* as a turning point for him as an OB-GYN. "Pope Paul VI expressed so clearly and beautifully the Church's position on reproduction and other matters. Like a lot of Catholics, I knew the Church teaches that contraception was objectively always seriously wrong, but did not know why. He did such an amazing job of presenting the union between a man and woman as holy. *Humanae Vitae* is so clear on these matters and it suddenly made so much sense."

At the urging of Dr. Holly, Stroud looked into the Pope Paul VI Institute and its medical consultant education program, to which Stroud applied and began attending in the fall of 2012.

It did not take long for the Medical Consultant program to make a profound impact on Stroud.



Dr. Chris Stroud

"I had made the decision to follow Church teaching. I was going to contact my patients and let them know that as of the new year, I would no longer prescribe contraceptives nor make referrals for sterilization," he said. "But after the first day at Education Phase I (EPI), I called my wife and said, 'I am not going to wait until January; we need to do this immediately.'"

He said that his wife, as she did throughout the entire transition, was completely supportive.

With months of mortgage payments in savings, the Strouds made the shift.

"We thought we were done," recalls Stroud. "But we also felt as if we had no choice."

Instead, Stroud discovered that for every patient he lost, he gained three in return. His practice grew so dramatically that in September 2014, he and his wife, a certified nurse-midwife, opened their own medical practice providing NaProTechnology services. The new practice is growing fast with many patients driving long distances to receive what Stroud calls "faithful, authentic, effective fertility care."

"It seems that every turn, God seems to say 'do more,' and as I do, He rewards me," Stroud says. "I have patients who come to us because they want a Catholic approach to their reproductive health, who want a disease-based approach to address their fertility challenges."

Today, Stroud could not be happier with his decision.

"This feels more like a vocation than a job," he says. "We pray with our patients before surgery. I'm frequently asked to give presentations and when I do, I tell the

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For the Study of Human
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audience that they don't have to choose between their faith and their fertility. I love to tell them there's a better way.

"The research and programs of the Pope Paul VI Institute are so important. I

will be indebted for all of eternity to Dr. Hilgers and the staff who are building a culture of life in the field of reproductive health care. They gave me a new career, a new vocation."

St. John Paul II Fellow, Dr. Gavin Puthoff

DR. GAVIN PUTHOFF is one of three St. John Paul II Fellows for the 2014–2015 year. Named in honor of the late pontiff St. John Paul II — an ardent supporter of the Pope Paul VI Institute — this Fellowship Program provides obstetrician/gynecologists (OB-GYNs) with advanced training in the medical and surgical applications of the Institute's medical breakthrough in women's health, NaProTECHNOLOGY.

Dr. Puthoff graduated in 2014 from the OB-GYN residency program at Mercy Hospital Medical Center in St. Louis and is a graduate of the University of Texas Medical School at Houston.

Born in Austin, Texas, Puthoff became a Catholic at the age of 15, which played a significant role in his decision to enter the medical profession, and more specifically, to become an OB-GYN.

As Puthoff says, "The field of OB-GYN is unique in the way it focuses on a woman's health and fertility. At its core, it is a very pro-life area of medicine as it involves one of the most important times in a woman's life — the birth of her child. This is one of the reasons I chose to pursue training in this field."

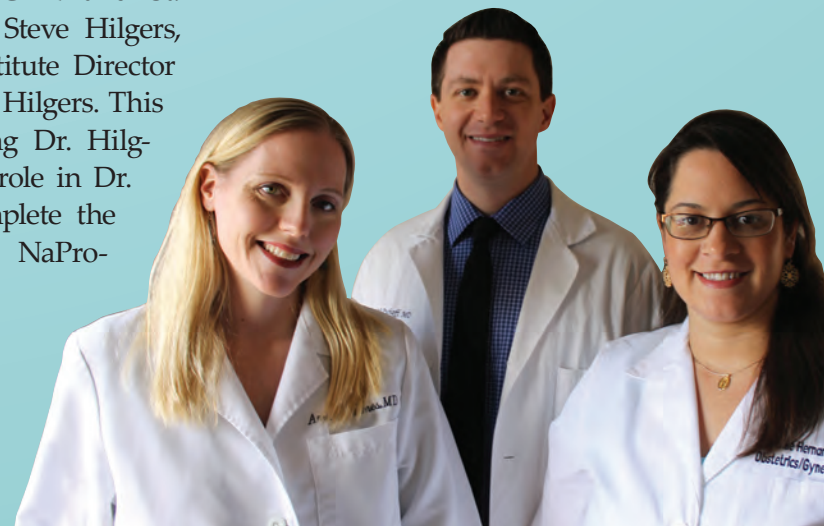
While in medical school at the University of Texas at Houston, Puthoff met another future OB-GYN and St. John Paul II Fellow, Dr. Steve Hilgers, son of Pope Paul VI Institute Director and Founder, Dr. Thomas Hilgers. This encounter with the young Dr. Hilgers played an important role in Dr. Puthoff's decision to complete the fellowship training in NaProTECHNOLOGY.

"With NaProTECHNOLOGY, I can address issues that cannot be addressed through mainstream obstetrics and gynecology," says Puthoff of the training he is receiving through the Fellowship program. "Of particular interest to me, NaProTECHNOLOGY provides very effective — and morally acceptable — treatments for the conditions that cause infertility, which gives new hope to many couples struggling with infertility."

Dr. Puthoff is looking forward to returning to St. Louis in August, where he will open a new NaProTECHNOLOGY Practice at Mercy Hospital. The FertilityCare Center at Mercy hospital was founded over 30 years ago by Diane Daly and Ann Prebil, co-developers of the Creighton Model FertilityCare System.

"It has been an incredible opportunity to spend this year working with Dr. Hilgers and the staff of the Pope Paul VI Institute," he says. "Thanks to Dr. Hilgers and his extensive research in this field, Catholic OB-GYNs like myself can offer patients valuable and effective treatments while remaining true to our moral convictions and the teachings of the Church."

St. John Paul the Great Fellows,
Drs. Amie Holmes, Gavin Puthoff,
and Jamie Hernandez.



Pope Paul VI Institute's Culture of Life Extends Hope and Faith to Bora Family

IT WAS IN 2001, AFTER THEIR SECOND MISCARRIAGE, when Terri and Bipin Bora knew there was something wrong. The couple had a daughter at the time, but they had lost each of their successive pregnancies — at 18 weeks and 10 weeks respectively.

It was around that time when the couple saw a news segment featuring Dr. Alan Beer, renowned expert in the areas of fertility and pregnancy loss. "The segment really struck a chord with us given our situation," Terri recounts.

On a whim, the Terri emailed Dr. Beer, who suggested the Boras contact Dr. Hilgers and the Pope Paul VI Institute.

In 2002, the Boras met with Dr. Hilgers, who was "extremely supportive." This support would soon become apparent when the Boras found themselves pregnant, a pregnancy which went 22 weeks without incident — until Terri began dilating.

"This all began happening on a Friday, and we were extremely worried," says Terri, recalling the experience. "Dr. Hilgers was out of town, and I was 80% dilated, on the verge of rupturing, and was given a battery of medications in preparation for a premature baby, which we were expecting."

The situation was so dire, in fact, that the attending medical staff had given Bipin a tour of the NICU, the intensive care unit for premature babies.

But Terri adds, "Then we spoke to Dr. Hilgers, who said the NICU is nice, but not for your baby. And I'll never forget as long as I live what he said next: 'We're going to go in and save your baby.'"

A cervical cerclage is a procedure where stitches are placed within the cervix to close a rupture and prevent an early delivery. Using this

procedure — coupled with bedrest, progesterone, and antibiotics — Dr. Hilgers was 99% confident that he could help the Boras take their pregnancy full-term.

It was in the moments leading up to her surgery when Terri would find additional comfort, as a minister who knew that Dr. Hilgers would be performing the surgery stopped by her bed.

"He said 'you are in good hands ... he is a man of God,'" she recounts.

The surgery was success, and it was 17 weeks later — at 39 weeks — when the Boras would have the cerclage stitches removed, paving the way for the birth of their son, who is now 10 years old.

"Dr. Hilgers performed a miracle," says Terri. "Without Dr. Hilgers, I know my son would not be here today."

Today, the Boras have four children — the three youngest (all boys) through the Pope Paul VI Institute.

"Growing up in a Christian background, I was accustomed to prayer. That is why it was so comforting to me when the nurses put their hands on my shoulder and began to pray before my surgery," Bora says. "When you go through the tragedy of losing a child, you get shaken, but the witness of the staff and doctors at the Pope Paul VI Institute was so strong and reassuring; it strengthened our belief in God."

Right: Terri and Bipin Bora with their youngest son and Dr. Thomas W. Hilgers.



Pope Paul VI Institute takes in record donations through Omaha Gives!

May 20 was an exciting day at the Pope Paul VI Institute! Over **150 generous donors** gave to the Pope Paul VI Institute through the Omaha Gives campaign, and this year we were able to raise **\$20,883.12!** And that doesn't count the bonus dollars that will be added from the Omaha Community Foundation when the dust settles! We are so blessed! Thank you for being a part of our mission and the Culture of Life!



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*Building a culture of life
in women's health care*

Message from the Director

I am happy to present you with the Summer 2015 edition of the Culture of Life Newsletter. In 2015, the Pope Paul VI Institute marks its 30th Anniversary, and today our work here at the Pope Paul VI Institute is as important as it was when we first opened our doors in 1985. We live in an age when contraception, abortion, sterilization, and in-vitro fertilization dominate the field of reproductive health care. The Pope Paul VI Institute rejects these methods because they destroy life, which was created in the image and likeness of God, offering superior, pro-life solutions to women's reproductive health needs.

The stories within this newsletter provide snapshots of how this culture of life is being built. We feature Dr. Christopher Stroud from Fort Wayne, Indiana, who converted to NaProTechnology in his OB-GYN practice, and in the process found fulfillment and success. We feature patients Terri and Bipin Bora, who came to the Institute seeking healing and found it. Finally, we feature Dr. Gavin Puthoff, one of three St. John Paul II Fellows presently working at the Institute.

This mission we share requires a collective effort. We need patients who believe and share their experiences with the Institute, we need donors who can help fund our ambitious work, and we need doctors to take our methods to the ends of the earth — where women and families seek and deserve superior reproductive health care that always fosters hope and healing and never destroys, life.

Thomas W. Hege, MD

