



## **Women' Telehealth Nominated as Atlanta "Healthcare Heroes" Finalist**

**May 17,2013**

Each year the Atlanta Business Chronicle honors the superstars of the healthcare field by sponsoring the annual Healthcare Heroes Awards. Women's Telehealth, whose headquarters are in Atlanta, was nominated and honored at this award ceremony for their work in community outreach by bringing high risk obstetric services into rural locations using telemedicine. United States Surgeon General, Dr. Regina Benjamin presented the awards.

Although most maternal fetal medicine centers are located in hospitals with large obstetric delivery services or in private practice in large cities. Patients frequently have to travel up to three hours from their home and away from family and support systems to find specialized obstetric care. There are very few maternal fetal medicine specialists in rural areas as it is a scarce medical subspecialty (only about 65 MFM specialists completing a fellowship in the US annually.) Recent advances in telemedicine, healthcare IT and reimbursement have helped pave the way in Georgia for Women's Telehealth.

About 15-20% of all pregnancies require some intervention with a maternal-fetal medicine specialist for such conditions as fetal anomalies, gestational diabetes, multiple gestations and other complications. In rural areas, where there has been local access to these specialists, many patients just aren't compliant with going to travel to see a specialist. With virtual access to maternal fetal medicine from wherever there are telemedicine units in rural areas (and Georgia has over 300 units deployed), high risk obstetric patients are offered ultrasound, high risk pregnancy screening, consultation (with bluetooth enabled tools) and ancillary services. Women's Telehealth also offers long distance learning opportunities for rural OB's and ultrasonographers.

Women's Telehealth has an agreement and pilot program with the State of Georgia Department of Community Health to provide telemedicine services in these rural areas to try and help decrease the risk of preterm delivery that requires a lengthy stay in the neonatal ICU. Although Women's Telehealth acknowledges that not every condition can be handled via telemedicine, they report that early statistics show that high risk OB patients can be managed in their home communities about 80% of the time. Improved access, less expense, better patient compliance and positive patient outcomes have all been results. Women's Telehealth is helping to save lives in rural Georgia – moms and babies.

For more information contact: Tanya Mack, COO, 404-702-2055