



**UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL**  
Newark, New Jersey

**\*\*\*PRESS RELEASE\*\*\***

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL ANNOUNCES 50% REDUCTION IN LENGTH OF STAY FOR NEONATAL ABSTINENCE SYNDROME BABIES AS A RESULT OF ITS HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL N.A.S.T.O.P. PROGRAM**

**Newark, NJ** – University Hospital announced today that its Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome Treatment & Observation Protocols (N.A.S.T.O.P.) program has successfully reduced the average length of stay duration for babies suffering from neonatal abstinence syndrome by more than 50%, from more than 42 to days to fewer than 20 days. The program has also decreased the neonatal abstinence treatment durations by more than 70%, reducing the overall reliance on drug-based interventions. The N.A.S.T.O.P. program was developed at University Hospital by Dr. Salma Ali in response to the growing impact of the opioid epidemic in newborn victims.

Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) occurs in newborn babies who are exposed to opioids or related drugs in the mother's womb. These withdrawal symptoms typically occur 2-3 days after birth, and can include tremors, seizures, excessive irritability, temperature instability, poor feeding habits, vomiting, and dehydration. The most common cause of NAS is exposure to opioids in the womb, and incidents of NAS have greatly increased nationwide in the last decade. New Jersey rates have roughly doubled in that time period, with more than 600 reported cases in the State annually.

"We are incredibly proud of the work that we have done here to standardize care and improve the health outcomes for our newborn patients that are suffering from NAS," said **Dr. Salma Ali, Neonatologist at University Hospital, and the Developer of N.A.S.T.O.P.** "Through N.A.S.T.O.P., we have created a culture of compassion, understanding, and healing for the mother-baby dyad suffering from NAS."

"The impact on babies in the womb is an often-overlooked effect of the opioid epidemic," said **Dr. Shereef Elnahal, CEO and President of University Hospital.** "N.A.S.T.O.P. is an amazing program that has shown real results in short order. Our maternal health practices at University

Hospital are world class, and this is another example of us not only saving lives in our community, but leading the way for the entire State with our cutting-edge practices.”

N.A.S.T.O.P. provides a standardized protocol for University Hospital’s providers to identify, treat, and manage infants suffering from NAS. The program requires caregivers to assess the newborns’ status and update the whole care team every three hours. Based on these assessments, N.A.S.T.O.P. provides clear criteria for the escalation, adjunct therapy, and weaning of pharmacological interventions. These guidelines ensure that pharmacological interventions are consistent between various providers and ensures continuity and standardization of care. N.A.S.T.O.P. also provides a number of non-drug-based interventions, including swaddling, skin-to-skin, decreased stimulation, breastfeeding, and addressing caloric deficits for withdrawing infants.

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### **About University Hospital**

University Hospital is part of one of the nation's leading academic medical centers and is the Level 1 Trauma Center for Northern New Jersey. Located at University Heights in Newark, University Hospital is a principal teaching hospital of Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences and a regional resource for advanced services across many medical specialties. For more information about University Hospital, please visit [www.uhnj.org](http://www.uhnj.org).