



## Wellstar and Colquitt Regional Medical Center Expand Training Women's Health Physicians

**MARIETTA, Ga. (March 24, 2025)** – Wellstar Health System and Colquitt Regional Medical Center are launching a new residency track to train obstetrics and gynecology (OB/GYN) physicians in Marietta and Moultrie. The program is unique in that it will provide new physicians with the opportunity to train in both suburban and rural areas of Georgia.

Known as Graduate Medical Education (GME), Wellstar Kennestone's obstetrics and gynecology residency program has been approved for a rural track at Colquitt Regional Medical Center in Moultrie, Georgia. This rural track expansion will ultimately grow to a complement of four OB/GYN residents training on site at Colquitt at one time. Each resident physician in training will spend time at Kennestone Regional Medical Center in Marietta but the majority of their training will be completed at Colquitt Regional.

"This program will create opportunities for physicians specializing in women's and maternal health to train and build their careers in rural Georgia," said Colquitt Regional Medical Center president and chief executive officer James Matney. "It's wonderful how Wellstar is reaching out to other health systems to help meet our local needs. Our community is encouraged and appreciative that Wellstar is helping train physicians who will care for people in rural areas across the state."

Georgia currently ranks among the worst states in the nation for maternal care. According to the March of Dimes, more than one-third (34.6%) of Georgia counties are maternity care deserts and do not have a single obstetric healthcare provider. Additionally, Georgia is higher than the national average for maternal mortality and inadequate prenatal care. However, many maternal deaths are preventable by improving access to care.

Since 2015, 66% of physicians in training at Colquitt Regional Medical Center have stayed in and near Moultrie to build their careers with residency programs that include Family Medicine, Psychiatry, and General Surgery. Wellstar and Colquitt Regional aim to improve access to women's health and maternal care in South Georgia through the new residency program.

"We have a shared goal of improving the health and wellness of every person in Georgia. This new program is another step towards meeting the critical need for physicians in rural Georgia," said Wellstar Health System president and chief executive officer Candice L. Saunders. "Doctors are more likely to stay in communities where they train, which makes partnerships among health systems like Wellstar and Colquitt essential to our success."

Including its partnership with Augusta University's Medical College of Georgia (MCG) at Wellstar MCG Health, Wellstar operates five teaching hospitals in the state—Kennestone, Cobb, Douglas, and Spalding. Wellstar recently announced that its Paulding and West Georgia hospitals are also becoming designated teaching hospitals.

"Becoming a physician is an extremely rewarding experience, and that's magnified in rural areas," said Val Akopov, MD, senior vice president of Wellstar Medical Group. "The physicians who train in this new program will see and feel the joy of working in a rural community."



“Meeting the needs of people in South Georgia has always been our mission,” said Daniel York, MD, Director for OB Residency at Colquitt Regional Medical Center. “Our new women’s health program will go a long way to providing our region with qualified physicians in rural areas. We have enjoyed working with Wellstar to get this program approved.”

In the last decade, Wellstar has grown its GME program from 14 trainees in 2016 to nearly 300 today, many of whom have remained with Wellstar and in Georgia. Through Wellstar’s partnership with Augusta University’s Medical College of Georgia, Wellstar MCG Health Medical Center is the primary clinical training site for more than 500 GME positions. With the new residencies, Wellstar will support more than 860 physicians in training.

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*Wellstar Kennestone Regional Medical Center in Marietta has had its OB/GYN residency program approved for a rural track at Colquitt Regional Medical Center in Moultrie, Georgia.*



*Colquitt Regional Medical Center is expanding with a new tower that will house a state-of-the-art Women’s Health Center.*