

## Being born is “nicer” in the new ward

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Music, aromas, colours and even water. For the last few days, giving birth at the Sant'Antonio Abate Hospital, in Gallarate, has been “nicer” and certainly more comfortable. The Obstetrics and Gynaecology Department, which is in the Trotti Maiano Building, was opened at the end of 2009, but only started working this week. The first baby to be born there was a boy, and his name is Tommaso.

The baby was born in the delivery room, which is also equipped with a birthing tub, although the parents chose to have a “traditional” birth. The other wards (Iris, Primula and Fucsia) have each been decorated in a different colour, in line with the theories of chromotherapy. The new building has been equipped with many comforts. There are nineteen twin rooms with en-suite bathrooms, areas where the baby can be changed, intercoms, cupboards and safes, and mothers can even relax during the labour, with soft music and aromatherapy.

“In 2010, putting mothers at risk during delivery doesn't make sense,” explains Doctor Rita Mancini, who is in charge of the ward, who could not conceal her satisfaction with this new structure, “but it is right to make the medicalisation of the delivery less and less intrusive. I mean it when I say that this is currently the best department in the province, and heads of other hospitals come here to see it. We have had the courage to do something completely different from the past. Just think of the large, bright rooms that we have, and how much they differ from the mini-rooms we were accustomed to.” In short, it is a real “hotel”, which, among other things, offers the future mum the opportunity to go through labour, the delivery and post-natal period in the same room, and to spend the first hours after the birth in a protected and familiar environment, with her partner and her newborn baby.

In this process of “de-medicalising” birth, particular attention is paid to the time before the delivery and the time after. “Here, future mums can have all of the necessary tests, such as routine and non-routine ultrasound.” Mancini continues. “There are pre-natal courses which have recently been organised with the Italian Automobile Club, ACI, to explain how best to behave when driving during pregnancy, and how best to fit child car seats. And there is no shortage of post-natal attention, either, in the days when the mum is still in hospital, and in the following month. Unfortunately, this is one of the most delicate aspects for which the institutionalised services are still inadequate.

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