The service screens women for anxiety, depression and trauma at multiple locations, including the maternity floors at Barnes-Jewish, the NICU at Children’s Hospital, and the Obstetric Clinic at the Barnes-Jewish Center for Outpatient Health. The service also accepts community and self-referrals.

In Missouri, obstetrician-gynecologists commonly screen new mothers for depression at the six-week postpartum checkup. Because mental illness can affect a mother’s ability to bond, PBHS screenings take place as early as eight weeks of pregnancy — potentially improving those first mother-child interactions. Rogers said women need to understand that mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression, occur commonly in pregnancy and in those often-grueling months after bringing home a newborn.

Screening is particularly important because, all too often, mothers of newborns are afraid to admit they are unhappy.

“Everybody believes that the experience of childbirth is supposed to be an ecstatic experience,” Rogers said. “So when that doesn’t happen, women feel that there is something wrong with them, or that they’re bad mothers.”

Learning to adjust

Torrence-Webber developed coping skills through weekly sessions in the NICU with PBHS therapist Anna Constantino-Pettit, MSW ’14. “Anna lifted my spirits,” she said.

Talking to Constantino-Pettit helped ease Torrence-Webber’s guilt as she split her time between her job and raising emotionally healthy children is the most worthwhile outcome I can think of,” she said.

Gift strengthens services for high-risk families

On St. Louis couple with firsthand knowledge of postpartum depression is boosting the efforts of the Perinatal Behavioral Health Service (PBHS). Mary Steward and David Steward II are committed to helping mothers and babies get off to the best possible start.

With a generous gift from the Steward Family Foundation, the couple created the Steward Family Perinatal Behavioral Health Service Fund to provide necessary support. The gift helps high-risk families that might not otherwise have access to mental health resources.

The Stewards learned about the PBHS while touring the medical school. They immediately were struck by how early intervention can translate into lifelong benefits for moms and their kids.

“We like the proactive aspect of the service,” said Mary Steward. “It’s not waiting around for something awful to happen, but getting women help on the front end.

“To not allow someone to be lifted out of that state and have a great experience with his child because she doesn’t have access to proper medical care or prescriptions — we just can’t allow that to happen,” she added.

The subject hits close to home: Mary Steward recalls the exhaustion and isolation she felt several weeks after the birth of her first child. Whether her depression was caused by hormonal changes, being cooped up during a bleak winter, or the transition to full-time motherhood, she said she knew that something was wrong.

“It was apparent that it wasn’t just the normal ‘I-just-had-a-baby-and-I’m-a-little-tired-from-getting-up-in-the-middle-of-the-night’ Mary Steward said. She confided in loved ones, who encouraged her to seek medical care. The treatment was effective, and, in talking openly about the problem, the Stewards realized that so many others are affected.

“We hope that our support will help make programs like this the standard-of-care,” David Steward II said. “It’s so important that women across cultures realize that this is a common condition that can be treated.”

Needed: 500 alumni

Take the Warren Challenge and transform the lives of medical students

I n gratitude for financial support and training opportunities that Bob Warren, MD/PhD ’78, MPH, received at the School of Medicine, he and wife Nancy Warren, PhD, are challenging fellow alumni to give back to Washington University. The couple has issued a $500,000 William Greenleaf Eliot Society Challenge dedicated to scholarship.

The challenge continues a long tradition of alumni helping future students. Scholarships and financial aid enable Washington University School of Medicine students to graduate with average debt of $97,000 — well below the national average of $180,000.

“If we can encourage 500 people to join us, together we can make a significant difference in the lives and careers of medical students,” said Bob Warren.

“Nancy and I have been members of the Eliot Society for many, many years. We’re delighted that we can now help more than we ever imagined with an additional estate gift. We hope alumni will accept our challenge and join us now as members of the Eliot Society, and also consider becoming Washington University Brooking Partners with an estate gift.”

All unrestricted gifts to the university of $5,000 or more qualify the donor for membership in the Eliot Society. Eliot Society donations support scholarships, student assistance programs, educational resources, faculty development and recruitment, and other initiatives.

The challenge runs through June 30, 2018, the conclusion of Leading Together: The Campaign for Washington University.

“We want our fellow alumni to reflect upon what their experiences in medical and graduate school at Washington University have meant to them and their families,” Bob Warren said. “The extraordinary medical education I received catalyzed my professional life,” he added.

“The financial support Bob received while he was in the Medical Scientist Training Program and I was getting my doctorate in psychology from Saint Louis University was transformative,” said Nancy Warren.

In particular, being free from medical school debt enabled the pair to pursue careers in academic medicine. In his roles as division chief of pediatric rheumatology and immunology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and as chief of pediatric rheumatology at Baylor College of Medicine in Texas, Bob Warren trained hundreds of physicians in the rare specialty of pediatric rheumatology.

He also championed caring for chronically ill children via a team approach, which included family members and other health-care practitioners.

Similarly, while on the faculties of both UNC and Baylor, Nancy Warren developed transition programs to help family members cope with crises or a loved one’s mental illness.

In addition to treating patients, Nancy now teaches at the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston.

Bob Warren is still focused on quality of care, but mostly from a different angle. He is now the Chief Medical Information Officer at the Medical University of South Carolina. He continues to see children with rheumatic diseases. Reflecting on their path, Bob and Nancy Warren want to support and transform the lives of young doctors in the same way they were helped.

“The financial support Bob received... was transformative.”

For information on establishing a scholarship at the School of Medicine, contact Medical Alumni and Development at (314) 935-9686 or medicalannualfund@wustl.edu.

To give securely online, visit medicalalumni.wustl.edu/give.

“Take the Warren Challenge and transform the lives of medical students.”

Mary and David Steward

THE GOAL:

Eliot Society

500 new or upgraded memberships

through bequests or planned gifts

Brookings Partners

500 new or upgraded memberships

For information on establishing a scholarship at the School of Medicine, contact Medical Alumni and Development at (314) 935-9686 or medicalannualfund@wustl.edu.

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