Pea Pod Machine

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There’s a new device in Bowling Green that will measure the body composition of an infant and the research it yields could lead to a longer, healthier life.

Amy Bingham shows us how WKU is collaborating with the Medical Center in this week’s View from the Hill.

This region’s tiniest residents will benefit from the latest research tool WKU has brought to Bowling Green. There are very few institutions in the United States that have a Pea Pod and it’s expected to bring WKU to the forefront of maternal and infant research.

The Pea Pod is the gold standard for measuring infant body composition.

 “If we’re just looking at body weight in babies we might be missing something so body composition just offers more information about how much fat versus lean mass they have.”

Dr. Rachel Tinius is using the machine to enhance her research on the long term health of moms and babies.

 “How mom’s metabolism and moms exercise levels during pregnancy might relate to body composition in their babies.”

Here’s how the Pea Pod works.

 “It’s kind of like a clear bassinet. What happens is we pull it out and lay the baby inside. We tuck him in (have a urine shield in there to protect the machine). And essentially slide the baby in.”

It takes two minutes for the information to be recorded.

 “During that two minutes we’re able to determine how much body fat a baby has.”

Statistics from the mom are also critical to the research. An assessment of her is done between week 32 and 39 of her pregnancy.

10:ish “We get a nice snapshot of mom during her pregnancy, her diet and physical activity for about a week.”

 “When we heard we were gonna get to house the pea pod here we were really excited.”

The Director of Women and Newborn Services Caitlin Burklow, who’se expecting her second child in a few months, is thrilled the machine is housed at the Medical Center.

 “To us that just means more research and hopefully better outcomes for our moms and babies which is why we’re all here everyday.”

And she’s planning on her and her baby being part of the research.

 “Maybe one day my little baby can be in this Pea Pod machine and I can check it out for myself.”

The grant funded machine arrived in July. Only a few newborns have been scanned so it’s too early to release any outcomes..

With this week’s View from the Hill, I’m Amy Bingham.

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