

# Treating Our Patients Like Family

When Samantha, 24, took a pregnancy test one morning and saw the positive result, to say she felt scared and overwhelmed would be an understatement. “I was terrified when I found out I was pregnant,” she recalls. “I was worried about the timing of this pregnancy — I had just gotten out of school, and I was worried about my relationship with my partner at the time, which wasn’t going so well.” Things at home, where Samantha lived with her mother, had been strained over the years and were only getting tougher too. When Samantha told her she was pregnant, her mother asked her to move out. Needless to say, Samantha felt alone at a time when she felt she needed her family the most. Luckily, she was able to find the support she was looking for elsewhere: her doctor’s office. Samantha, speaking of Dr. Michael Schweitzer and his practice team in Stoney Creek, says, “It feels like an extended family here at Dr. Schweitzer’s office. I knew that if I came here, I would be cared for.”



Samantha with the practice team at Dr. Schweitzer's office. (Dr. Schweitzer is having some fun with the camera).

Samantha recalls the caring attitude of the practice team when she came in with the news of a baby on the way. “Laura [the nurse] and the doctor were able to walk through my fears with me. Laura sat me down, got me some water and asked me what was wrong. When I told her my fears about my job, my partner and my future, she helped me see the positive and told me she knew that I could handle it.” Samantha proceeded with the pregnancy and had the support of her care team every step of the way. “Every time I came in [for an appointment], they would offer me something. Every time. Something to eat, something to drink ... They would do more than what my mom would do for me.”

Samantha and her boyfriend decided to move in together. For the next year, she struggled through some of the unpleasant side effects of pregnancy, and some mental health issues. Luckily, with a doctor in the Hamilton Family Health Team, she had access to additional healthcare supports in her doctor’s office, at no extra cost. For example, in the first trimester, she was connected with the team dietitian to help address her extreme morning sickness. “I had nausea, vomiting ... I couldn’t eat. I lost about 15 pounds. It was amazing to be able to see Mun, [the registered dietitian at the practice] to help me find ways to eat more and get healthy again.” After the birth of her son, Leo, who is now 16 months old, she started to struggle with depression. She was able to speak to a mental health counsellor and other members of the care team to get help. “It’s liberating to be able to open up to them ... they are there to help you and not judge you,” she says of the care team.

These days, Leo and Samantha are doing well. “I love being a mom,” she says. She credits the care team at Dr. Schweitzer’s office for helping her be the healthy person and caring mom that she is today. “I felt supported by the team. They gave me tips on sleeping, nursing and more. They tell me to trust my intuition. When I come to visit them, it barely feels medical. I feel like they just want to do things to help me propel forward in my life.” And propelling forward she is. Samantha plans to go back to school to study humanities this fall, and is excited about what the future holds. She is loving every moment of Leo’s childhood and finds joy in bringing him to his appointments at the doctor’s office. Judging by the fun she had with the team during her interview for this report, it seems they enjoy having her there, too. “We are happy she is with us” says Dr. Schweitzer of his patient. There are smiles all around the room, and Samantha’s is the biggest.

