

For Immediate Release
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Cook Children's Medical Center Performed Its First-Ever Separation Surgery for Conjoined Twins

Fort Worth, Texas – Cook Children's Medical Center is pleased to announce that the hospital has successfully performed its first-ever separation surgery for conjoined twin sisters AmieLynn Rose and JamieLynn Rae Finley of Fort Worth, Texas. The 11-hour long surgery took place on Monday, Jan. 23, at Cook Children's. A team of 25 medical professionals, including 6 surgeons, carefully performed this historic surgery, while parents Amanda Arciniega and James Finley patiently waited for news of their separation. While still very early, both AmieLynn and JamieLynn are recovering well.

"Our team at Cook Children's was honored to bring together our collective expertise in treating high-risk infants and conducting complex surgery to help AmieLynn and JamieLynn reach this incredible milestone," said Jose L. Iglesias, M.D., Medical Director of Pediatric Surgery at Cook Children's Medical Center and the lead surgeon for twins' surgery. "The separation surgery will give AmieLynn and JamieLynn better opportunities to improve their health and development, and to grow as the unique, individual little girls that they have been since birth, regardless of their physical connection as conjoined twins."

The Cook Children's Medical Center team comprised medical experts from across multiple specialties to collaborate on this unique and complex surgery, leveraging the team's expertise in treating the most difficult, rare and complex pediatric conditions. Conjoined twins are rare; it's estimated to occur in 1-in-200,000 live births. In fact, each year only five to eight conjoined twins worldwide survive the first few days after birth. JamieLynn and AmieLynn are omphalopagus twins, which means they are joined at the abdomen and share one or more internal organs. In their specific case, they were joined from the lower part of the breastbone to their bellybutton and shared a liver.

The girls were born prematurely on Oct. 3, 2022, at 34-weeks gestation, weighing 4 pounds, 7.8 ounces at Texas Health Harris Methodist Hospital Fort Worth. Since their birth, physicians at both facilities have worked closely to prepare a delivery and postnatal game plan.

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"The working relationship between the whole team—that's made possible by the close relationship of the hospitals—allows us to be the center that can provide this type of highly advanced service to North Texas so families don't have to go halfway across the state or halfway across the country or even to Dallas for care," Bannie Tabor, M.D., Maternal Fetal Specialist at Texas Health Resources said.

The teams have worked to improve the girls' health, growth and development and to prepare them for the surgery. Neonatologists Dr. Chad Barber and Dr. Mary Frances Lynch worked alongside the Cook Children's NICU team focusing on all aspects of the girls' health and wellbeing; ensuring the proper development of their brain, heart, lungs and other vital organs and focusing on their nutrition and growth.

To achieve this groundbreaking surgery, the Cook Children's Medical Center team dedicated months to the planning and collaboration of this separation. The surgical team, led by Dr. Jose L. Iglesias, studied scans of the girls, built models of their anatomy, mapped out potential surgical solutions, prepared the operating room and rehearsed the carefully choreographed surgical procedure.

The teams ran through multiple simulations of the separation surgery and prepared for multiple foreseeable scenarios and outcomes. The expert team orchestrated all anticipated details for the day of the surgery and the days leading up to it.

"At this stage in AmieLynn and JamieLynn's growth and development, this was the right time for them to have the surgery," said Dr. Mary Frances Lynch, neonatologist at Cook Children's Medical Center. "Separation now will benefit AmieLynn and JamieLynn by allowing them continue reaching important growth and development milestones in their individual health journeys."

On the day of the surgery, there was an expansive team of medical professionals—three anesthesiologists, four pediatric surgeons, two plastic surgeons and 18 other clinical professionals. They were separated into two teams, one for each girl. Those in purple scrub hats were on JamieLynn's team, while Team AmieLynn wore green scrub hats, and all items associated with their surgery the twins' care was color-coordinated accordingly, even the girls' nails were painted in coordinating colors. Everyone worked together until the babies were separate, then each team focused solely on their assigned baby.

In the coming weeks and months, AmieLynn and JamieLynn will continue to receive outstanding care from Cook Children's Medical Center's neonatology and NICU teams, focusing on their healing and continued growth and development.

"Our Promise to this community and every family who seeks care under our blue peaks is to do everything for the child, and I'm so grateful this family trusted us to do everything we could to help change their girls' future," said Rick W. Merrill,

President and CEO of Cook Children's Medical Health System. "This is a magical moment in Cook Children's history and really showcases the expertise of our medical staff and the highly advanced care we have to offer children and families in our community, state and all across the country."

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