



# PEOPLE

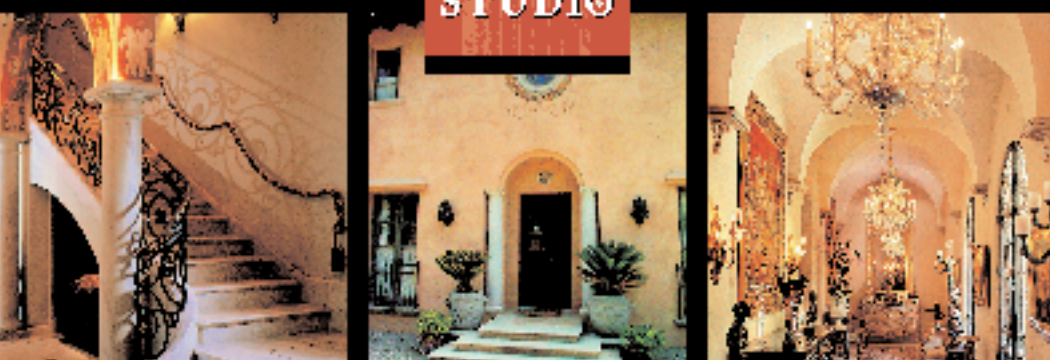
## Dr. Ayesha Shaikh

Having practiced obstetrics and gynecology in Santa Barbara for some 20 years, Dr. Ayesha Shaikh (her last name rhymes with “bake”) is often recognized around town. Mohammed, her husband of 25 years, freely jokes about being overshadowed by his prominent





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## PEOPLE

spouse. "He says, 'I'm the only Muslim Indian who walks six feet behind his wife!'" Dr. Shaikh says with a laugh.

Come January, Dr. Shaikh will be in an even more prominent position when she takes over as Cottage Hospital's chief of staff. Her new assignment—to serve as a liaison between the hospital's administration and its medical team—comes at one of the most exciting times in the facility's history, as construction gets underway on a \$500 million new hospital to be completed in 2012.

As anyone who's been through a home remodel can testify, years of construction can be stressful, and Dr. Shaikh, who was previously vice chief of staff, will now be on the front line. "You know how physi-

**"IN MY PRACTICE, 70 TO 80%  
OF COUPLES WANT TO  
KNOW THE BABY'S SEX. FOR  
THE 20% WHO DON'T, IT'S  
USUALLY THEIR FIRST CHILD."**

cians are," she says. "If they want to be heard, they can be heard. I think I'll be hearing a lot of, 'Where's my parking?'"

Fortunately, soothing frazzled nerves comes naturally to the good doctor, as she's delivered thousands of babies over the years. (She stopped counting at 250, a number she reached in her first two years of practice.) So far, Dr. Shaikh has yet to see a father faint, but there have been close calls. "When they start turning funny shades, I say, 'Okay, there's a chair, why don't you sit down. I'll take care of the baby and the mom,'" she says, her lilting Indian accent having the desired calming effect. "It's amazing how these guys can do all this Rambo-style stuff, but then they see that little baby and they burst into tears."

Dr. Shaikh, whose mother died of gynecological cancer, grew up in India and moved to the United States when her husband enrolled in an engineering Ph.D. program in Utah. Later, the pair came to Santa Barbara, where Mohammed opened a document-imaging company. The couple has one daughter, Sarah, a 20-year-old college student who was born at Cottage Hospital.

Even with her new administrative duties, Dr. Shaikh plans to continue delivering babies three days a week. Her private practice includes herself, a midwife (see below) and a nurse practitioner. "There are babies I've delivered who are now teenagers and taller than me," says this five-foot-two dynamo. "I always say, 'They all come out perfect.'" **-LESLIE DINABERG**

### A MIDWIFE'S TALE

Dr. Shaikh's practice offers an increasingly popular alternative for expectant mothers: midwifery.

Geared toward healthy mothers, it's a birthing option for women who want less medical intervention, such as chemically induced labor. "I do full prenatal care from six weeks all the way through postpartum," says **Wanda Westerman**, a certified midwife and nurse practitioner, who has delivered close to 300 babies. As Westerman emphasizes, midwifery doesn't always mean home birthing. "People think it's a lay person's job. It's not. It's board certified," says Westerman, who carries her own caseload and delivers at Cottage Hospital. (If complications arise, she consults Dr. Shaikh.)

"Patients let us know whether they want physician care or midwife care," she says. "The term midwife actually means 'with women.' I listen to women and what they want so I can support the normal process of pregnancy and birth."



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