

SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF BLACK MATERNAL MORTALITY

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Is there a one all answer to why the maternal mortality rates in the U.S. and especially Georgia so high?? Is there something we are missing? Is it policy? Is it pre-existing health conditions?

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

African American mothers in Georgia have a 66% mortality rate, compared to White mothers who are at 43.2% and Hispanic mothers who are at 18.1%.[1] The numbers are alarming. To put it in perspective, African American mothers are three to four time more likely to die from pregnancy or childbirth than white mothers!!!! Unfortunately, the numbers don't lie, and they are not improving. While many preexisting conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure increases the likelihood of pregnancy complications, they also have contributed to the rise in maternal deaths. With research I have learned that preexisting health concerns are not the only contributing to the rise of maternal deaths in Georgia, especially among black women.

WHAT ARE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS AND HOW DO THEY RELATE?

Social determinants of health include the conditions in which we are born, work, learn, live, play, and age. Social determinants have the ability to impact health outcomes and overall well-being. The figure below [2] shows how race, psychosocial influences, and medical comorbidities may have a bidirectional effect, along with social determinants, on maternal outcomes.

Going forward, I believe that WE have to recognize the multifaceted collaboration of social determinants in the lives of pregnant women of minority status, and specifically Black women. This alone has the potential to an invoke understanding of disparities in maternal outcomes across the board. Community-based research has shown that bundling prenatal care with other services, such as doula support, specifically aimed to reduce known inequalities in social determinants has been shown to improve outcomes. In the future, long-term, prospective research will be needed to continue to explore the relationship between these factors and maternal outcomes. It is imperative that we continue on the path to recognizing the problem, talk about and bring attention to the problem, and ACT on a community-level to help solve the problem!

Sources

https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/health-of-women-and-children/measure/maternal_mortality/state/GA

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