

Enhanced Pregnancy-Related Death Data Elucidates Opportunities for Intervention

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The Alliance for Patient Access, founded in 2006, is a national network of physicians dedicated to ensuring patient access to approved therapies and appropriate clinical care. AfPA accomplishes this mission by recruiting, training and mobilizing policy-minded physicians to be effective advocates for patient access. AfPA is organized as a non-profit 501(c)(4) corporation and headed by an independent board of directors. Its physician leadership is supported by policy advocacy management and public affairs consultants.

In 2012, AfPA established the Institute for Patient Access, a related 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. The Institute for Patient Access is a physician-led policy research organization dedicated to maintaining the primacy of the physician-patient relationship in the provision of quality health care. In furtherance of its mission, IfPA produces educational materials and programming designed to promote informed discussion about patient access to approved therapies and appropriate clinical care.

Visit allianceforpatientaccess.org and instituteforpatientaccess.org to learn more about each organization.



According to [newly released data](#), nearly one in four pregnancy-related deaths were caused by a mental health condition, including suicide and drug overdose. (1) Maternal deaths that occur during pregnancy through one year postpartum are included in the compilation of data from 36 states.

Leading Causes of Maternal Mortality

After mental illness, excessive bleeding claimed the most maternal lives, 14%, while cardiac and coronary conditions accounted for 13%. Infection, thrombotic embolism, and cardiomyopathy were each linked to 9% of deaths.

More than half of deaths, 53%, occurred between seven days and one year after pregnancy. Furthermore, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, four in five deaths were preventable.

Enhanced Data Program

These are the first data to be released through [ERASE](#) Maternal Mortality, (2) a program that aims to support more robust data collection about the causes of pregnancy-related death. The CDC launched Enhancing Reviews and Surveillance to Eliminate Maternal Mortality in 2019 in response to increasing maternal mortality rates and deepening disparities in deaths between women from communities of color and white women.

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Since then, the federal government has awarded 39 states and one U.S. territory additional funding to enhance the work of [Maternal Mortality Review Committees](#). (3) These multidisciplinary committees convene to identify, review, and characterize pregnancy-associated death data, which include representatives from public health, obstetrics and gynecology, mental and behavioral health, forensic pathology, and other stakeholders.

Improving Prevention Efforts

A more comprehensive understanding of drivers of maternal mortality can better inform prevention efforts. Given the complexity of interrelated factors, intervention opportunities exist at the patient, provider, facility, system, and community levels. Federal officials suggest that [“everyone can help](#) prevent pregnancy-related deaths.” (3)

“Likewise, listening to new moms’ physical and mental health concerns is critical to linking them to the most appropriate care. Finally, expanding access to comprehensive insurance coverage can improve prenatal and postpartum care, enhancing the opportunity to identify and mitigate risk factors before they become deadly.”

Asking female patients if they are or have recently been pregnant can help inform healthcare providers' diagnoses and treatment decisions. Likewise, listening to new moms' physical and mental health concerns is critical to linking them to the most appropriate care. Finally, expanding access to comprehensive insurance coverage can improve prenatal and postpartum care, enhancing the opportunity to identify and mitigate risk factors before they become deadly.

The newly available data elucidate the causes of pregnancy-related mortality in America. It is up to policymakers and healthcare providers everywhere to make more informed decisions and implement interventions to improve outcomes for pregnant women and new moms.

References:

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2022/p0919-pregnancy-related-deaths.html>
2. <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternal-mortality/erase-mm/index.html>
3. <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2022/p0919-pregnancy-related-deaths.html>

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