

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

- Maternal mortality is defined as the death of a pregnant woman during pregnancy, at delivery or soon after delivery, while maternal morbidity is defined as unexpected outcomes of labor and delivery that result in significant short or long term consequences (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020)
- Access to health care services in the United States is often dependent on one's proximity to health care services, health insurance, and socioeconomic status, among other factors (Howell et al., 2016).
- Marginalized communities within the United States often experience barriers to care that may hinder positive health outcomes.
- Black women in particular are three to four times more likely to die from pregnancy and childbirth related complications than White women are (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020)

PICO: How does health care access impact maternal health outcomes for African American women?



LITERATURE REVIEW

- According to a cohort study conducted by Cabacungan et al. (2012), African American women have increased risk for comorbidities such as infection, hemorrhage, hypertension, and preterm labor compared to their white counterparts.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2020) posits that Pregnancy-Related Mortality Ratios (PRMR) for African American women in the United States are higher than the PRMRs for white women in the United States regardless of education level.
- A population-based study done in New York City by Howell et al. (2016) found that factors such as an individual's residence, insurance, proximity to a hospital, and racial segregation can influence access to maternal healthcare.
- Leonard et al. (2019) conducted a study involving hospital discharge records from California over a seventeen year period and concluded that the racial prejudice and stress experienced by individuals such as African American women is associated with decreased birth weights and corresponding severe maternal morbidity.
- Wang et al. (2020) conducted a systematic review that suggests that African American women that were uninsured or using Medicaid in perinatal and postnatal periods and African American women that delivered at a hospital in a rural area are at heightened risk of developing a severe maternal morbidity.

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SIGNIFICANCE

- The maternal mortality rate in the United States is the worst in any industrialized country.
- “Race-related health disparities are among the starkest and most resistant to progress” (Biem, 2020, p. 1).
- The risk of pregnancy related death for “...black women in some regions of the United States is similar to risk for women in some developing countries has alarmed health professionals, patients, and policymakers” (Howell et al., 2019, p. 387).
- Structural racism plays a significant role in healthcare access and quality.
- To do no harm is the foundation of medicine, yet the system is plagued with implicit bias and discrimination.
- Black women cannot be solely attributed to social determinants. “structural racism is a powerful social determinant of maternal health that has roots in a historical system of oppression” existing today in policies and practices of healthcare (Taylor, 2020, p. 507).
- This issue remains a public health and human rights emergency that needs to be addressed.

SUMMARY

There are many barriers African American women must face when receiving care, and because of this they experience a higher risk of complications compared to white women. This shows that there are issues within the healthcare field that must be reevaluated.

OUTCOMES

- “Black mothers are more likely to deliver at higher risk-standardized severe maternal morbidity hospitals than are white mothers, contributing to black-white disparities” (Howell et al., 2016, p. 143)
- Implicit racial bias has been reported in the health care system and can affect patient-provider interactions, treatment decisions, patient adherence to recommendations, and patient health outcomes (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020).
- There are many factors that contribute to these poor outcomes that African American women experience, and it is important that we prevent them.