

UNDERSTANDING BLACK MORBIDITY AND MORTALITY



Black mothers are disproportionately affected by maternal mortality. In 2021, the CDC reports that Black women are roughly three times more likely to die from pregnancy-related complications than white women. This alarming statistic underscores the urgent need to address racial disparities in maternal healthcare. Philadelphia also struggles with high infant mortality rates, and this issue disproportionately affects Black families. A recent report by the Philadelphia Health Department found that the Black infant mortality rate in the city is nearly double that of white infants. According to the [2023 March of Dimes Report](#), Black babies are one-and-a-half times more likely to be pre-term than all other babies. You cannot discuss maternal mortality and morbidity without discussing pre-term births.

There are several factors that affect Black morbidity, mortality, and preterm births. For example:

Socioeconomic Factors: Socioeconomic disparities as well as limited access to quality healthcare, educational opportunities, and employment can contribute to poorer health outcomes.

Structural Racism: Systemic racism has deep-rooted effects on health. Discriminatory practices in housing, employment, and healthcare access create an environment where Black individuals face greater health risks.

Healthcare Access: Disparities in healthcare access, including insurance coverage and the availability of healthcare facilities in underserved communities, contribute to unequal health outcomes.

To call attention to these issues, this spring the Center held two webinars to address Black maternal morbidity and mortality. The first one, entitled [Racism, Midwifery and Healthcare](#), featured Dr. Lucinda Canty, Associate Professor of Nursing at the University of Massachusetts Amherst Elaine Marien College of Nursing. She provided an historical context of midwifery practice while examining racism and its impact on prenatal care and delivery. That seminar was followed by [Black Maternal Morbidity and Mortality-Beyond the Why!](#), a conversation with birth workers from all over the United States. Shanna Williams, LCSW, MEd, Founder of SE Doula LLC; Dr. Tiffany Montgomery, Coordinator for Women's Services Medical City Las Colinas; Dr Anuli Njoku, Associate Professor in the Department of Public Health at Southern Connecticut State University; and Dr. Marian Evans, MPH, Associate Professor of Public Health and Coordinator of Master of Public Health Programs in the Department of Public Health at Southern Connecticut State University; Megan Simmons, JD, MPA, a Birth Equity Consultant, discussed best practices and next steps in improving birth outcomes of Black Mothers.

A short list of strategies that target the root causes of these disparities include:

Improving Access to Healthcare: Expanding access to quality healthcare services in underserved communities can help bridge the gap in healthcare disparities.

Education and Awareness: Promoting education and awareness about the root causes of poor birth outcomes for Black women and marginalized birthing people.

Policy Changes: Implementing policies that address systemic racism, reduce socioeconomic disparities, and promote equity in healthcare are essential to achieving long-term change. Policy changes must also occur within the institutions that train the healthcare providers and the settings where births take place.

Black morbidity and mortality are critical public health concerns both nationally and in cities like Philadelphia. Understanding the disparities, their causes, and potential solutions is crucial to improving the health and well-being of Black Americans. Addressing these disparities requires a multi-faceted approach that combines healthcare access, education, and systemic change to promote health equity for all.

One strategy that is being explored is [The Philly Joy Bank](#). An income pilot that provides cash to pregnant Philadelphians with the goal of improving birth outcomes.

2024 PENN RENFIELD AWARD UPDATE

This summer, the nomination process to award the 2024 Penn Renfield Foundation Award concluded, yielding a total of 13 exceptional nomination applications. By the end of the year, the nine-member selection committee will participate in a rigorous review to evaluate these applications and ultimately select the 2024 Penn Renfield Award winner. Stay tuned for an official announcement in January.



IT'S ON US UPDATE

Year one of the Governor's It's On Us funding concluded with students from Sayre High School participating in the Bring In the Bystander prevention program. This program is a sexual violence prevention program aimed at increasing, among potential bystanders and third-person witnesses, prosocial attitudes and behaviors toward and awareness of risky behaviors and precursors to sexual victimization. Year two of the funding will result in administrating the program to students at West Philadelphia High School. Participating in sexual violence prevention programs increases consensual sexual behavior, body autonomy, and protective measures. These outcomes may also extend to preventing other violence.



THE MIDWIFERY PROGRAM WELCOMES DR. EMILY SLOCUM



Dr. Emily Slocum is a nurse midwife with over 18 years of clinical experience. Her interest in midwifery grew from her anthropological studies and subsequent work in the Peace Corps in Mali. After obtaining her midwifery credentials, Emily worked in settings ranging from the Bronx, where she maintains a per diem clinical practice, to a stint with Doctors Without Borders in the Democratic Republic of Congo, to Nashville at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. Her language proficiency in French, along with some Spanish and Bambara enable her to connect with women and families of many different backgrounds. Her clinical interests have always revolved around the care of marginalized or traditionally underserved populations.

Dr. Slocum also has a strong interest in education, and to that end she obtained her DNP as well as a post master's certificate in nursing education. Her research interests include nursing education theories, as well as improving nursing competencies in the care of marginalized populations, particularly in reproductive healthcare.

Emily lives on the Lower East Side of Manhattan with her husband and their cat, Mookie. She has run a number of marathons but enjoys yoga, walks, bikes, and hikes more now. She's happiest when stinky cheese, good friends, and a sunset view are nearby.

WHAT WE ARE READING?

Mihaly, L., Scherzer, T., McGuinness, C. Stephan, L.
*Shifting the Paradigm: Antiracist Education for Advanced
Practice Nursing Providers*

<http://online.liebertpub.com/doi/10.1089/heq.2023.0088>

Abstract:

Racism in the United States adversely impacts health outcomes. Achieving health equity will require an explicitly antiracist approach to the education of health care providers (HCPs). This article examines a required course that focuses on teaching advanced practice nursing students about the structural foundations of racism. This approach shifts significantly away from teaching race-based medicine (which assumes a biological basis for disparities) and the social determinants of health (which often blames individuals for disparities).



GIVING

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