

CONTRIBUTION OF HOMICIDE AND SUICIDE

TO MATERNAL MORTALITY IN INDIANA

A CALL TO ACTION

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INTRODUCTION

Overview

- Maternal deaths due to domestic violence and perinatal mood disorders (PMD) in the United States
- Maternal deaths due to domestic violence and PMD in Indiana
- Recommendations for action

Why are these issues important?

- Economic impact
- Public health impact
- Social implications: Challenging norms

DEATHS DUE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

AND PMD IN THE UNITED STATES

- Prevalence of domestic violence: 25% - 33%
- As common as gestational diabetes or preeclampsia
- Pregnant/recently pregnant women more likely to be homicide victims than to die of any other cause
- 92% of female homicide victims killed by someone they know
- Highest risk: young women, Black women, no PNC
- Prevalence of PMD: 1 out of 7 women
- Pregnancy often considered “protective” against suicide
- CDC: Suicide is in the top 5 causes of death for women between ages of 15 – 44
- Suicide may account for between 2.7% - 15% of deaths within one year postpartum
- Britain: 40% of maternal deaths indirectly due to depression

MORBIDITY - - GRAVE IMPACTS ON MATERNAL
FETAL AND INFANT HEALTH

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

PMD

AND

UNPLANNED PREGNANCY

- Risk of mistimed/unwanted pregnancies elevated significantly if the woman had been physically abused
- Violence consistently associated with unplanned pregnancy
- “...A compelling argument can be made of the indirect mechanism through which the **climate of fear and control surrounding abusive relationships could limit women's ability to control their fertility**. Lack of fertility control can lead to unintended pregnancies, which are also associated with adverse outcomes for women's and infant health...”
- In the postnatal period, maternal depressive symptoms are significantly associated with unplanned pregnancy
- Pregnancy viewed as unintended by males and intended by partners appeared to pose greatest risk for postpartum depressive symptoms
- ACOG: Screening should include assessment of barriers to care, unstable housing, **unintended pregnancy**, communication barriers, nutrition, tobacco use, substance use, **depression**, safety, **intimate partner violence**, and stress.

MATERNAL MORTALITY

INDIANA

- 128 deaths of pregnant/postpartum women between 2002 – 2005
- Causes of death:
 - Medical (39.8%)
 - Accident/Unintentional Injury (21%)
 - Homicide (16.4%)
 - Undetermined (10.1%)
 - Suicide (7.8%)
 - Drug/Alcohol (4.7%)
- 77.5% White, 14.7% Black, 7.7% Other/Not listed

HOMICIDE AND SUICIDE DEATHS OF PREGNANT AND POSTPARTUM WOMEN

- 31 deaths (24.2%)
 - 21 homicides (67.7%)
 - 10 suicides (32.3%)
- One-third pregnant at time of death; majority of other deaths occurred during the first 6 months postpartum
- 58% age 24 or under
- One-third Black

HOMICIDE AND SUICIDE DEATHS OF PREGNANT AND POSTPARTUM WOMEN

Homicide Victims:

- 24% pregnant at time of death
- 43% of postpartum deaths occurred within 6 months
- 66% ≤ 24 years, (23.8% ≤ 19)
- 47.6% Black

Suicide Victims:

- 6 pregnant at time of death; postpartum deaths were evenly split
- 40% ≤ 24 years
- 100% White
- 2 had known mental health diagnosis

- Smoking
- Evidence of past abuse among women who were not homicide victims
- Possible under-categorization of homicide/suicide victims
- Social complexity of the cases: late/no PNC, drug use, obesity, STIs

NOTES OF INTEREST FROM THE DATA

SELECT LIMITATIONS

- Missing/incomplete information
- Maternal factors
- Connection between domestic violence, PMD, and death

DISCUSSION

TRENDS FROM THE DATA

- Race
- Age
- Marital status
- Location
- Time of death during perinatal period

CASE REPORT NOTES

Called husband in AM. While on phone
husband heard a single shot.

Drove car over embankment onto creek bed.

Left a note to the family: "I've
decided I wasn't worth the time."

Forced off bridge - I80-94 at Grant Street.

Suicide. Place of death: Holiday Inn.

Six empty pill bottles found
by decedent. 14 suicide
notes in sealed envelopes.

Shot x3 close
range. Husband killed wife
then shot self. 18 month
old and 1 week old infant
survived.

Husband beat, strangled, stabbed wife and
killed unborn baby then fled scene.

ADDRESSING MATERNAL HOMICIDE

AND SUICIDE IN INDIANA

- Improve data collection and reporting
- Develop a statewide maternal mortality review team
 - Indiana Fetal and Infant Mortality Review (FIMR) as a resource
- Conduct family interviews

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ADDRESSING MATERNAL HOMICIDE

AND SUICIDE IN INDIANA

- Collaborate with outside groups
 - Other states' maternal death review teams
 - Local advocacy groups

- Provide clinical outreach and education
 - System for informing clinicians of patient deaths
 - Partner with statewide professional organizations
 - Educate providers on identification and management of domestic violence and PMD

- Reframe the issue to include social change
 - *How do social, medical, legal, and administrative policies and systems fail to meet the health and safety needs of vulnerable women?*

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INQUIRIES

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