

## Tailoring Perinatal Health Communication: Centering the Voices of Mothers at Risk for Maternal Mortality and Morbidity

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### WHY IS THIS RESEARCH IMPORTANT?

- The maternal mortality rate in the U.S. is the highest among industrialized countries, and for Black people in the perinatal period is 2-3 times that of White people. The same trend exists in infant mortality, which is 2.5 higher for Black infants compared to White infants.
- The main reasons for maternal and infant mortality are late or no access to prenatal care, and lack of care in the postpartum period.
- This paper explored the best communication strategies to inform mothers about the importance of perinatal care and to encourage them to participate in programs that provide it, as well as studying their current perceptions about the importance of care during pregnancy and postpartum.

### HOW WAS THIS RESEARCH CONDUCTED?

- The effort was led by a Healthy Start (HS) site, to learn how to better reach mothers in need. HS provides care coordination during the perinatal period in communities where the infant mortality rates are at least 1.5 times higher than the national average.
- 29 pregnant people or current parents participated in group interviews lasting about one hour. The majority of participants identified as Black or African American (57.7%), and less than half (48.3%) had participated in the HS program.
- Questions about how to talk to pregnant people about the importance of perinatal care, and the words and pictures to use in program materials were explored.

### WHAT WERE THE KEY FINDINGS?

- Programs like Healthy Start can support provider-patient interactions and improve expectant people's self-advocacy skills.
- Peer-to-peer groups or mentoring programs, including for partners, could be an important tool to increase participation.
- Any promotional materials need to be easy to understand and not assume any previous knowledge or understanding of terms like postpartum, depression, or health complications.
- Providers should use whole-person care approaches that are inclusive and culturally diverse.
- The use of links, or barcodes, to provide additional information can help keep the main messages simple and give people agency to learn more .
- Popular social media platforms like YouTube and TikTok could be effective to increase awareness about programs.

**Allowing pregnant people to share their stories, using simple descriptions and explanations, making them feel seen during interactions, and reflected in communication materials can encourage participation in perinatal care programs and save lives.**

### ACTION STEPS

Future studies should include the pregnant person's partner's perspective to improve program communication strategies. Research needs to investigate the reasons for low engagement and high attrition in these programs.



### CONTINUE READING

#### Full Article

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#### About Dr. McClain Sampson

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