Overview:

Every pregnancy-related death is tragic, especially because about 60% are preventable. Still, about 700 women die each year from complications of pregnancy. A pregnancy-related death can happen during pregnancy, at delivery, and even up to a year afterward (postpartum).

For 2011-2015:

- about 1/3 of deaths (31%) happened during pregnancy;
- about 1/3 (36%) happened at delivery or in the week after; and
- about 1/3 (33%) happened 1 week to 1 year postpartum.

- Heart disease and stroke caused more than 1 in 3 deaths (34%). Other leading causes of death included infections and severe bleeding.
- Black and American Indian/Alaska Native women were about 3 times as likely to die from a pregnancy-related cause as White women.

PROBLEM:

Pregnancy-related death can happen throughout pregnancy and after.

Every death reflects a web of missed opportunities.

- Factors playing a part can include:
  - access to care;
  - missed or delayed diagnoses;
  - not recognizing warning signs.
- Most deaths are preventable, no matter when they occur.
- We can better identify and close gaps in access to quality care.
Preventing pregnancy-related death every step of the way.

Death can happen up to a year after delivery.

Source: CDC Vital Signs, May 2019

33% 1 week to 1 year after delivery
31% During pregnancy
36% During delivery and up to 1 week afterward

THE WAY FORWARD

HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS CAN:

• Help patients manage chronic conditions.
• Communicate with patients about warning signs.
• Use tools to flag warning signs early so women can receive timely treatment.

HOSPITALS AND HEALTH SYSTEMS CAN:

• Standardize coordination of care and response to emergencies.
• Improve delivery of quality prenatal and postpartum care.
• Train non-obstetric providers to consider recent pregnancy history.

STATES AND COMMUNITIES CAN:

• Assess and coordinate delivery hospitals for risk-appropriate care.
• Support review of the causes behind every maternal death.

WOMEN & THEIR FAMILIES CAN:

• Know and communicate about symptoms of complications.
• Note pregnancy history any time medical care is received in the year after delivery.

Leading causes of death differ throughout pregnancy and after.

• Heart disease and stroke cause most deaths overall.
• Obstetric emergencies, like severe bleeding and amniotic fluid embolism (when amniotic fluid enters a mother's bloodstream), cause most deaths at delivery.
• In the week after delivery, severe bleeding, high blood pressure and infection are most common.
• Cardiomyopathy (weakened heart muscle) is the leading cause of deaths 1 week to 1 year after delivery.

For more information
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