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“IGNORED AND INVISIBLE”: PERSPECTIVES FROM BLACK WOMEN, CLINICIANS, AND COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS FOR REDUCING PRETERM BIRTH

Background. The preterm birth rate among Black women is consistently higher than that of all other racial groups. The crisis of high-risk pregnancy and preterm birth among Black women is a confluence of racism, historical factors, stressors, and unsupportive healthcare system. To inform the development of preterm birth risk reduction programs, this study aimed to collect and synthesize the experiences of Black women who have experienced preterm birth, and from clinicians and community-based organizations who serve them.

Community partner. March of Dimes - Los Angeles County <https://www.marchofdimes.org/>

Methods. A qualitative study design was employed whereby nine focus groups and 17 key informant interviews that included Black women, clinicians, and representatives from community-based organizations (CBO) were facilitated in Los Angeles County from March 2019 to March 2020. Participants were recruited through CBOs and the focus groups took place both in-person and virtually. The process of thematic analysis was employed to analyze Black women, CBO, and clinician focus group and interview transcripts.

Results. From the data, five overarching themes emerged. Black women experience chronic and pregnancy-related stress, along with lasting trauma from adverse maternal experiences. These issues are exacerbated by fragmentation and cultural incongruity within healthcare and social services. Black women have relied on self-education and self-advocacy to endure the barriers related to racism, mistreatment, and their experiences with preterm birth.

Conclusions. Healthcare and social service providers must offer more holistic care that prioritizes, rather than ignores, the racial components of health, placing increased importance on patient education, attentiveness to patient needs, and support for Black women.

Research is completed.

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