

## “Ignored and Invisible”: Perspectives from Black Women, Clinicians, and Community- Based Organizations for Reducing Preterm Birth

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### Background

- Black women experience the highest rates of preterm birth and other adverse birth outcomes among racial groups
- Racism, historical factors, stressors, and unsupportive healthcare system have caused this crisis
- The Community Birth Plan is a collaboration between Black stakeholders, community members, hospitals, perinatal healthcare providers and organizations in California to raise awareness on racial disparities in birth outcomes and implement evidence-based activities that improve Black birth outcomes

### Objective

- To inform the development of preterm birth prevention programs, this study aimed to collect and synthesize the experiences of Black women who experienced preterm birth, and of clinicians and community-based organizations who serve them

### Study Design

- 9 focus groups and 17 key informant interviews that included Black women, clinicians, and representatives from community-based organizations were facilitated in Los Angeles County
- Study conducted March 2019 to March 2020
- Participants were recruited through community-based organizations and the focus groups were both in-person and virtual
- Thematic analysis was used to analyze focus group and interview transcripts

## Recommendations based on study findings:

1. Listen to Black women
2. Improve quality of perinatal care to improve birth outcomes
3. Multidisciplinary care teams are needed to reduce stress for Black women during and after pregnancy
4. Tools, training, and systems changes are needed to facilitate better patient/clinician communication on warning signs of complications

### Results: 5 Themes Emerged

- Chronic and pregnancy-related stress among Black women
  - "I had to function through this pregnancy even though I was going through so much and, at times, suffering." – Patient
- Lasting trauma from adverse maternal experiences
  - "I thought it was my fault that my body couldn't carry my baby." – Patient
- Fragmentation in healthcare
  - "The financial need to see a lot of patients in a day makes this a really challenging issue to manage." - Physician
- Cultural incongruity
  - "We have been around this circle because people don't want to share power and resources." – Community organization employee
- Self-education and self-advocacy
  - "You have to advocate and educate yourself for your baby because they will try to bully you." - Patient

### Conclusions for Practice

- This study calls attention to systemic faults when treating Black pregnant patients, regardless of socioeconomic status
- It is crucial that policymakers, clinicians, community partners, and patients concede the causes of racial perinatal health disparities, and choose to cooperate and confront the stated challenges, and improve overall care to reduce the rate of Black preterm births

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