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Barriers in Health Care Leading to High Maternal Mortality Rates in Southern New Jersey

Katarina Rusinak
Rowan University

Muznah Khan
Rowan University

Ava DiNardo

Nayarith Lopez
Rowan University

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Katarina Rusinak OMS-I, Muznah Khan, Ava DiNardo, Naya Lopez OMS-II

Health Careers Opportunity Program (HCOP) Rowan-Virtua School of Osteopathic Medicine

Background

Maternal mortality is the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of the end of a pregnancy from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy. New Jersey has the highest maternal mortality rate (MMR) in America and this rate keeps rising each year. The MMR in New Jersey is 46 deaths per 100,000 live births, compared to America's MMR, which is 32.9 deaths per 100,000 live births. Specifically, South Jersey has the highest MMR out of all of New Jersey. According to NJ Spotlight News, South Jersey mothers are twice as likely to experience maternal mortality than mothers in North Jersey.

Objectives

- Identify the barriers mothers face in Southern NJ counties
- Create a progressive way to make a change for women across NJ, especially Southern NJ

Methods

The data was obtained through the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as well as other private organizations to quantify the maternal mortality in Southern New Jersey (NJ) compared to the rest of the state and look at potential factors related to this problem.

Results

State-Level
PAMR: 41.0
PRMR: 14.4

NORTH
PAMR: 36.5
PRMR: 14.0

CENTRAL
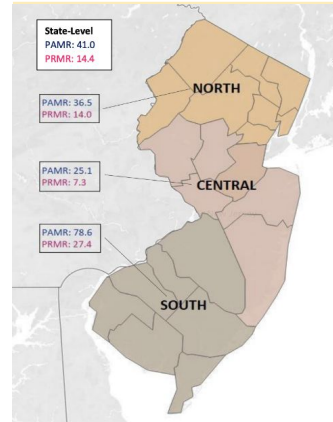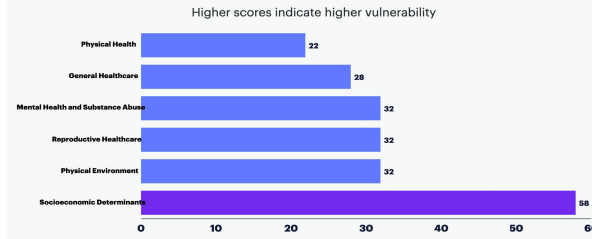PAMR: 25.1
PRMR: 7.3

SOUTH
PAMR: 78.6
PRMR: 27.4

Figure 4. The pregnancy-related mortality ratio (PRMR) and pregnancy-associated mortality ratio (PAMR) were highest among women who lived in the Southern region of the state.

There is a high pregnancy-related mortality ratio and vulnerability in the Southern NJ counties: Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, Salem. In 2022, this region had the highest number of medically underserved areas (MUAs) in the state of NJ. MUAs have a lack of primary care providers, as well as high poverty, infant mortality and elderly population. The Southern regions of NJ are also more rural than the rest of NJ, posing an accessibility issue.

Factors related to maternal vulnerability
Higher scores indicate higher vulnerability

Factor	Score
Physical Health	22
General Healthcare	28
Mental Health and Substance Abuse	32
Reproductive Healthcare	32
Physical Environment	32
Socioeconomic Determinants	58

Conclusion - Proposed Interventions

1. Educational Posters

- Empower expecting mothers with informative posters about common maternal risks, different resources, tips, and contacts.
- Distribute via healthcare centers, OB/Gyn offices, and a QR code for quick guidance.

2. Community Workshops and Webinars

- Engage families through sessions covering prenatal care, nutrition, mental health, and navigating health care.
- Virtual sessions to increase accessibility.

Limitations

1. The effectiveness of posters relies on individuals reading them and engaging with the content.
2. Attendance at workshops or webinars may be low due to scheduling or other personal constraints.

References & Acknowledgements