

# September is National Infant Mortality Awareness Month

## *Several Interview Opportunities Available by UWM and City of Milwaukee Health Department to Discuss Problem and Prevention Strategies in Addressing Issue*

UWM and the City of Milwaukee Health Department are joining forces this month to provide continued information related to the growing infant mortality issue in our community.

### **Here are the facts:**

Each year in Milwaukee there are a shocking 235 infant deaths and stillbirths. Many of these deaths are preventable. Between 2003-2005 the overall infant mortality rate for Milwaukee was 11.6 deaths per 1,000 live births, however the rate among African-Americans was significantly higher at 17. In Racine, the rate of infant mortality is even higher than in Milwaukee, with a rate of infant deaths among African-American infants at 28 per 1,000.

In the 2003 Big Cities Health Inventory, ([http://www.naccho.org/pubs/documents/ms001\\_bigcities.pdf](http://www.naccho.org/pubs/documents/ms001_bigcities.pdf)), Milwaukee ranks poorly among other large cities in the United States in infant mortality rates and in the disparity between blacks and whites. The U.S. ranks 23<sup>rd</sup> among industrialized nations in babies dying before their first birthday behind Cuba, Chile, Poland and Kuwait.

Over the past 10 years, there has been virtually no improvement in infant mortality rates in Milwaukee. Infant mortality is a public health crisis in Milwaukee.

### **Most Milwaukee infants die because of .....**

- Prematurity and low birth weight (leading cause of infant death)
- Birth defects
- Unsafe sleep environment
- Maternal diabetes, hypertension and substance abuse

### **What can be done...**

- Encourage more women to get early prenatal care and practice family planning
- Promote smoking cessation and a smoke-free home as a positive prenatal health behavior
- Model a safe sleeping environment: babies should sleep in a crib or Pack N' Play on their back without pillows, toys, bumper pads, or blankets.
- Screen women for depression often and help them get the care they need to overcome this debilitating condition.
- Reduce barriers to insurance inequities
- Promote quality prenatal care

### **How you, the media, help to raise awareness this month:**

We can arrange for any one or a combination of the following specialists to be interviewed to raise awareness and highlight what can be done to help reduce infant mortality rates.

#### *J. Kris Barnekow, Professor, UWM, College of Health Sciences*

Directs MCH-PASS Program (Preparing Academically Successful Students in Maternal and Child Health) where College minority students in Occupational Therapy and Communication Sciences and Disorders receive training to serve children with special needs and their families; also works on "Early Detection and Developmental Screening of Children Ages Birth to 3 to Detect Special Health Care Needs in Milwaukee County" (Contact: Cheri Chapman at 414-229-3225)

Can discuss:

- Preparing students on health disparities in maternal and child health, including infant mortality

- The importance of developmental screening, and how connecting with health care providers may decrease infant mortality through education and health promotion activities

2. Jennifer Runquist, Professor, UWM, College of Nursing

An expert on maternal-infant health, postpartum fatigue and depression, post partum nursing

Can discuss:

- Postpartum depression and all the resources available to moms (Contact: Cheri Chapman 414-229-3225)

3. Teresa Johnson, Professor, UWM, College of Nursing

Actively involved with March of Dimes, Wisconsin Association for Perinatal Care and other organizations that focus on programs and research that support healthy pregnancies, healthy babies and healthy families

Can discuss:

- Assessing infant size at birth, assessing risk for hypoglycemia in early post-birth period, professional support for breast – feeding (Contact: Cheri Chapman at 414-229-3225)

4. Mary K. Madsen, Professor, UWM, College of Health Sciences

Facilitates focus groups with young African American mothers to raise awareness of the importance of pre-natal health care (Contact: Cheri Chapman at 414-229-3225)

Can discuss:

- Barriers minority women face in seeking pre-natal care and existing disparities

5. Ron A. Cisler, Director, Center for Urban Population Health, Associate Professor, UWM, College of Health Sciences

Can discuss:

- Center’s focus on infant mortality in urban populations, including projects that involve community agencies, e.g. City of Milwaukee Health Department, Wisconsin Association for Perinatal Care, Aurora Health Care
- Team of researchers Center has assembled to further address infant mortality from a research perspective (Contact: Trina Salm at 4141-219-4084)

6. Representatives from the Center and Aurora Health Care

Can discuss:

- “Safe Mom and Safe Babies” Program, a project to identify pregnant women and new mothers at risk for intimate partner violence, and provide targeted assessments, case management, education, prenatal care, advocacy and mentors and effective stage-based clinic/in-home interventions to improve the health and safety outcomes of women and their children
- Taskforce on Pre-and Inter-Conception Care led by Aurora Health Care, Inc., a planning grant to develop culturally appropriate strategies for enhancing access to pre-conception and prenatal care, and improving birth outcomes among at-risk women (Contact: Trina Salm at 4141-219-4084)

7. Jill Paradowski, City of Milwaukee Health Department

Has over 35 years experience as a public health nurse for the City of Milwaukee

Can discuss:

- The importance of “safe sleep” environments for infants and provide demonstrations to primary care physicians, community and faith-based organizations (Contact: Raquel Filmanowicz at 414-286-3175 )