

Welcome support: Grant will fund local infant mortality research

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By Janine Anderson

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RACINE - The city's fledgling Fetal Infant Mortality Review project has received a much-needed grant to fund its work for the next year.

The local FIMR has just started to analyze data related to fetal and infant deaths in Racine. The city has one of the highest rates of fetal and infant death in the state. No one has yet done an in-depth study on the reasons behind Racine's high fetal and infant mortality rates.

Over the past few months the group has begun to collect data from 2006. The grant, from the Center for Urban Population Health, will fund work on data from 2007.

Teresa Johnson, a nurse consultant for Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare-All Saints and an associate professor at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee's College of Nursing, said the grant will help them develop the infrastructure needed to work on the project. The people involved with the group will meet next week to start the process of building a full-fledged project, including finding researchers and staff to conduct interviews with families.

"The purpose is really to gather data to help health care providers have a better understanding of the experience for the families, for the mothers," she said. "And, to look at what kinds of interventions we can provide to No. 1 decrease morbidity and mortality and No. 2 provide the most appropriate support for a family during that experience."

Johnson said the group will need future funding. They can reapply for the Center for Urban Population Health grant and may seek other funding as well.

The organization is a partnership between the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health and Aurora Healthcare, said Ron Cisler, director of the Center for Urban Population Health and an associate professor at UWM and the School of Medicine and Public Health. They focus on urban populations, primarily in the eastern part of the state, and research population-side health issues.

"We're very interested in looking at health disparities or inequities, and we are really interested in more preventive approaches," Cisler said. "(We look at) the social, cultural and even economic determinants of health. We're kind of a center that addresses issues from a population or community need level."

He said the Racine project fit perfectly into their mission.

"We're not just interested in Milwaukee and the inner city of Milwaukee," he said. "We're interested in the larger corridor. The fact that we could bring in the Racine and Kenosha area is good. We thought it did expand the boundaries of our urban area better than any Milwaukee project could."