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Young Women of Color Disproportionately at Risk for Maternal Sepsis, the Second Leading Cause of Maternal Death, Confirms New Data

New data released by New York State Department of Health and END SEPSIS identifies women most at risk of developing maternal sepsis; the United States has the highest maternal mortality rate of any industrialized country

NEW YORK, NY–DECEMBER 7, 2021: Women of color and those under the age of 20 are far more likely than white women and older mothers to develop maternal sepsis, according to findings from a comprehensive analysis of maternal sepsis cases in New York State, undertaken by the New York State Department of Health. Maternal sepsis is the second leading cause of maternal death in the United States; survivors often suffer severe physical, psychological and emotional trauma.

The analysis was commissioned by [END SEPSIS, the Legacy of Rory Staunton](#), the leading national sepsis advocacy organization, with funds from the Department of Health and Human Services' Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority. Its findings are being used to guide the development of a [public awareness campaign](#) for pregnant women and healthcare providers aimed at reducing maternal death. It includes a recently-launched [public service announcement](#).

“Maternal mortality has increased in the United States, including in New York State, over the past 20 years,” says Dr. Marcus Friedrich, former Chief Medical Officer for New York State Department of Health’s Office of Quality and Patient Safety, who led the analysis project. “New York State Department of Health is committed to improving outcomes for sepsis, the most severe form of infection, and is pleased to collaborate with END SEPSIS to identify opportunities for targeted education of vulnerable women and their health care providers.”

Sepsis is a life-threatening condition that stems from infection; it is responsible for 270,000 American deaths annually. When sepsis occurs during pregnancy or within six weeks of giving birth, it is called maternal sepsis.

The publicly available dataset includes all maternal sepsis cases recorded in New York State between 2016 and 2018.

Major findings include:

- Black, Hispanic and Asian women had significantly higher odds of developing maternal sepsis compared to White women.

- Hispanic women are more than twice as likely as White women to develop maternal sepsis
- Black women are nearly twice as likely as White women to develop maternal sepsis
- Asian Women are almost 1.5 times as likely as White women to develop maternal sepsis
- Women with C-sections had three times the odds of developing sepsis during delivery and postpartum as those who delivered vaginally.

Also identified are chronic comorbidities that increase the odds of maternal sepsis.

The full dataset can be accessed: health.data.ny.gov

“Maternal sepsis leaves families motherless and has devastating repercussions for women who survive the condition,” says Orlaith Staunton, Executive Director of END SEPSIS. “I believe that this new information and the education campaign that will follow will have a profound, potentially lifesaving impact on the lives of women, particularly women of color, in New York State and beyond.”

About END SEPSIS

[END SEPSIS, the Legacy of Rory Staunton](https://endsepsis.org), works to end the hundreds of thousands of preventable deaths and devastating disabilities that result from sepsis in the U.S. each year. Through public awareness and education, quality improvement, advocacy and family support, END SEPSIS has successfully spearheaded the most aggressive public battles and cutting-edge, action-based initiatives to keep families safe and end this public health emergency. END SEPSIS envisions a world where everyone understands sepsis as a medical emergency, recognizes its signs, and can confidently advocate for their own care and the care of others and where patients are met in healthcare settings by medical professionals trained to rapidly recognize and treat sepsis. Visit endsepsis.org

