

COMMUNITY VOICES: DOCUMENTARY EDUCATION ON RACIAL DISPARITIES IN INFANT AND MATERNAL HEALTHCARE

Abstract

Substantial disparities exist in Black infant and maternal mortality. Black birthing women are three to four times as likely to experience pregnancy-related morbidity or mortality compared to their white counterparts. Similarly, Black babies are 50% more likely than white babies to be born pre-term and twice as likely to have low birth weight or die in their first year of life. Despite growing knowledge of these disturbing disparities over the past few decades, little has changed in these rates over time. Additionally, racial disparities in infant and maternal mortality cannot be fully explained by individual factors such as income, education level, and environmental exposures, nor by structural factors like access to quality health care, health insurance coverage, food availability, and unemployment rates. The inability to fully explain these inconsistencies indicates that there is likely an implicit factor of healthcare that perpetuates these inequalities - institutional racism and personal racism, often due to unconscious biases. Anti-racist education is needed to help illuminate the role of racism in infant and maternal health outcomes and promote meaningful change.

This intervention evaluates the effectiveness of a documentary film, Community Voices, and a group debrief in educating healthcare workers about infant and maternal mortality disparities. The film contains women's stories of racism and mistreatment in gynecologic and obstetric settings. The following debrief discusses the participant's understanding of the disparities, opportunities for advocacy, and incorporating solutions into the participant's practices.