

Did You Know? Data Comparisons

High quality health care data is needed to improve the health and safety of mothers and babies, including eliminating or reducing premature birth and low birthweight, maternal mortality and morbidity, and health disparities. Widespread use of health information technology and uniform standardized data collected on birth and death certificates can help improve perinatal outcomes, direct public health surveillance, and help inform the women's health research agenda.



Did you know? The U.S. is the only developed country without a uniform birth and death record data set.

- 25% of states don't use the 2003 U.S. standard birth certificate, which includes detailed information about the health of mother and baby, including whether prenatal care was initiated in the first trimester.¹
- Approximately 50% of states don't use the 2003 U.S. standard death certificate, which indicates whether the deceased was pregnant and other vital maternal information.²
- ACOG and CDC recommend use of pregnancy-related and pregnancy-associated information in the death certificate and health records, which gives detailed information on indirect causes of maternal death.
- States that have a pregnancy check box on their death records report as much as a 20% increase in maternal mortalities, leading to increased identification of indirect deaths.³
- Electronic registries allow for seamless transition from medical records to birth and death certificates, greatly reducing the chance for error in filling in birth and death record data.
- Uniform adoption of the U.S. standard birth and death certificates by all states would increase the accuracy of state and U.S. comparative data and rankings of perinatal and infant mortality and morbidity.

Did you know? The way the U.S. collects birth and death record data varies greatly from other countries.

- Birth and death data are used to assess the overall health of a country, but apples to apples comparisons of U.S. and other nation's maternal and infant health statistics are nearly impossible.
- The U.S. reports fetal deaths beginning at fetal weight of 350 grams, while other countries report fetal deaths beginning at higher weights, making U.S. infant mortality statistics appear comparably high.

What we do well

- ACOG has developed complete electronic health records for pre-natal, labor and delivery, and post-partum care. We've made these records available free of charge to major HIT firms.

Definitions

Maternal Mortality: the ratio of maternal deaths over live births. The World Health Organization uses the narrow definition of maternal death found in the ICD-10 coding system, while the CDC and ACOG use a broader definition of maternal death that can include information from hospital charts.⁴





Pregnancy-Associated Death: the death of any woman, from any cause, while pregnant or within one calendar year of termination of pregnancy.

Pregnancy-Related Death: death resulting from complications of the pregnancy itself, the chain of events initiated by the pregnancy that led to death, or aggravation of an unrelated condition by the physiologic or pharmacologic effects of the pregnancy that subsequently caused death.

Recommendations

Provide \$3.4 million in the FY12 appropriations bill or the Public Health Prevention Fund for the remaining 25% of states to adopt the electronic birth registry based on the 2003 U.S. birth certificate.

Provide \$20.8 million in the FY12 appropriations bill or the Public Health Prevention Fund for the remaining 50% of states to adopt the electronic death registry based on the 2003 U.S. death certificate.

Provide grants to states to train health providers and hospital personnel on appropriate recording of birth and death certificate data.

Mandate a pregnancy-check box on death certificates in every state, in addition to use of definitions of pregnancy-related and pregnancy-associated deaths.

Establish maternal mortality as a mandatorily reported event.

Footnotes

¹ National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information Systems. <http://www.naphsis.org/index.asp?sid=1>

² Ibid.

³ Main, Elliott. Maternal Mortality: New Strategies for Measurement and Prevention. *Current Opinion in Obstetrics and Gynecology*. 2010, 22:511–516.

⁴ *ibid*