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COMMUNITY*Source*

Newsletter



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3 Reasons Why a Holistic, Community Approach Can Help Improve Maternal Care In Georgia

Just when Georgia's moms thought their lives were returning to some sense of normality in today's post-pandemic world, they now face a new challenge: surging inflation that puts pressure on funds available for health care.

These days it's hard to miss the news stories about how inflation is running around 8%, its highest level in 40 years. And most economic experts foresee inflation remaining elevated for the rest of this year. While health care costs generally lag inflation (contracts among insurers, providers and the government are agreed upon in advance), rising prices for food, gas and clothing already are taking a bite out of everyone's wallets.

For expecting mothers who do not receive prenatal care because they can no longer afford it due to inflation, the consequences could be dire. Research has shown that babies of mothers who forgo prenatal care are five times more likely to die than those born to mothers who receive care.

Our state, sadly, has the highest maternal death rate in the country, with about 26 Georgia women dying each year from pregnancy complications for every 100,000 births (compared to the national average of about 17), according to the Georgia Department of Public Health (GDPH). GDPH also estimates that 87% of those deaths were preventable.

The solution to improving outcomes requires a holistic strategy to maternal care. It involves building community and extending care beyond conventional health care providers to include a wider range of social services experts, such as child and family social workers, mental health professionals and housing and transportation specialists. Here are three areas where such an approach can make a difference:

1

Build a community of traditional and non-traditional health care professionals

Effective maternity care requires a collaborative approach. In addition to traditional health care professionals – an obstetrician/gynecologist, primary care physician, midwife and nurse – expecting mothers can benefit from the care of nonmedical experts.

For example, involving a nutritionist, doula, mental health therapist and community health worker can help patients stay healthy during pregnancy and better prepare for birth. These professionals are specially trained in their area of expertise and can provide essential nutritional and emotional care beyond that offered by conventional health care practitioners.

A multidisciplinary team approach helps ensure that no stone is left unturned, and mothers receive the proper care before and after birth.

2

Build a virtual community

Before the pandemic, consumer use of virtual health care services was limited. Today, telemedicine is no longer a "nice to have" option. It is a "must have" service. With the right internet connection and computer, virtual care is now readily available to expecting mothers.

Virtual care makes it easier to schedule visits and follow-up appointments, and to discuss test results and care plans. This is especially true for working women and expecting mothers who do not have a car of their own or rely on public transportation. Virtual prenatal classes also significantly help first-time mothers become more knowledgeable and prepared for childbirth.

3

Build a community beyond medical care

Another important consideration involves assessing the social, economic and physical environments of expecting mothers. These social determinants of health – education, safe and affordable housing and transportation, easy access to grocery stores – all play a role in a mother's health and quality of life.

Affordable housing and health care is a topic unto itself, but there is a growing body of research that has linked poor health to housing instability (such as falling behind on rent or having to move because of gentrification). Local affordable housing experts can provide invaluable insight that can potentially help improve health by identifying non-medical costs and barriers that may negatively impact care.

Just as important, many expecting mothers – especially those in underserved populations – require reliable, inexpensive transportation options so they can visit members of their health care team. Our company, for example, offers no-cost transportation services to make it easy for mothers to get to and from visits with their health care professionals.

There is a well-known African proverb that says, "It takes a village to raise a child." By involving a community of traditional and non-traditional health care professionals, a virtual community and a community beyond medical care, we collectively can help more expecting mothers deliver healthy babies and improve the standard of maternal care in Georgia.



Take a Shot at Preventing Illnesses

By: Dr. Seema Csukas, VP, Market Chief Medical Officer, CareSource Georgia

Over the past year and a half, the words "vaccine" and "vaccination" have become part of our daily vocabulary. While the scientific importance of vaccinations has never wavered, the societal importance of vaccinations has come under fire. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in the U.S., vaccines have greatly reduced or eliminated many infectious diseases that once routinely killed or harmed infants, children and adults. But the viruses and bacteria that cause these diseases still exist, meaning we can still be infected if we aren't vaccinated.

Dr. Seema Csukas, VP, Market Chief Medical Officer, CareSource Georgia, a nonprofit health plan, shares why it's critical that all individuals receive their necessary vaccines.

Vaccines Lower the Risk of Serious Disease

As seen by the coronavirus pandemic, unvaccinated people who contract COVID-19 wind up more seriously ill and have a higher hospitalization rate than their vaccinated counterparts. As COVID-19 has shown, every year, thousands of adults in the U.S. become sick by diseases that vaccines can help prevent. A vaccine can help prevent discomfort and suffering that preventable diseases cause. If you have higher risk factors due to your career, lifestyle or health conditions, talk to your doctor about which vaccines are right for you.

Vaccines Protect You and Your Loved Ones

After receiving a vaccine, your body creates natural defenses to safely develop immunity from the disease. Not only does this lower your risk of infection, but it can prevent any ensuing complications. For example, the Hepatitis B vaccine lowers your risk of liver cancer, and the flu vaccine lowers your risk of heart attacks and other flu-related complications from existing health conditions.

Vaccines not only keep us safe, but they protect our loved ones, too. Some individuals may not be eligible to receive certain vaccines due to their health or age, so by getting vaccinated, we keep them safe.

Vaccines Help Us Avoid High Medical Bills

If hospitalized with a serious yet preventable disease, you will receive expensive medical bills for the care needed. A Kaiser Family Foundation study found that from June through August 2021, preventable COVID-19 hospitalizations among unvaccinated adults cost over $5 billion, and over 280,000 COVID-19 hospitalizations could have been prevented by vaccination during that same time. Not sure if your health insurance policy covers all necessary immunizations? Make sure to check with your plan.

Vaccines Can Prevent More Profound Community Infection

Vaccines can help maintain greater community health by preventing unusual circumstances. For example, receiving a flu vaccine while we're still battling the ongoing pandemic can help to reduce the chances of what's been called a "twindemic." This is the possibility of a severe flu season happening alongside an increase in cases of COVID-19, which would overwhelm the health care system.

To help protect you and your family during the flu season this year, CareSource provides coverage for necessary exams and immunizations. It can also provide you with safe transportation to remove barriers from getting proper health care. For more information, visit www.CareSource.com.



About CareSource

CareSource is a nonprofit, nationally-recognized managed care organization with over 2 million members. Headquartered in Dayton, Ohio since its founding in 1989, CareSource administers one of the largest Medicaid managed care plans in the U.S. The organization offers health insurance, including Medicaid, Health Insurance Marketplace, Medicare Advantage and dual-eligible programs. Through its network of health plans, CareSource serves members in Arkansas, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio and West Virginia. The company is leading the way in serving populations with complex needs and extended its presence into 12 additional states with the acquisition of The Columbus Organization, a trusted partner to health care agencies and provider organizations in improving coordination and support for individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities and behavioral health challenges through its staffing, quality improvement and care coordination services. As a mission-driven organization, CareSource is transforming health care with innovative programs that address the social determinants of health, health equity, prevention and access to care.

Visit the CareSource Newsroom to stay up-to-date on new information that could impact your community.

In the Community

CareSource Easter Egg Extravaganza



On Saturday, April 16, CareSource and UndaGround Madness/ATL TV Network partnered to celebrate the Easter season with the CareSource Easter Egg Extravaganza at Midway Park in Decatur. CareSource donated Easter baskets and other giveaways as prizes for participants. In addition to an exciting Easter egg hunt, children got the chance to decorate eggs, get their faces painted and pet bunnies!

DeKalb County Health Department was also on-site providing vaccinations and $100 gift cards to those who qualified.

About Our Partner:
UndaGround Madness LLC services in Branding, Marketing and Promotion, Television Broadcasting, Event Planning, Media Production, and Photography. UndaGround Madness LLC's mission is to provide great, professional service to our clients, and to ensure that all projects taking place within 'the madness' benefit greatly from their involvement.

Learn more at https://www.undagroundmadness.com.

Georgia Mountain Food Bank and Brenau University Health Fair: Hispanic Alliance

CareSource was pleased to partner with the Georgia Mountain Food Bank and Brenau University Nursing Department for their recent health fair and food distribution event. This event is part of a series of similar initiatives in nearby counties. Health screenings were available on-site, including blood pressure, glucose and cholesterol checks. CareSource partnered as the exclusive CMO, providing diapers, feminine pads and informational materials to participants.

A special thank you to The Hispanic Alliance for providing the space and location, and CORE, for providing COVID-19 vaccines at the event.

Learn more at https://www.gamountainfoodbank.org.

GEORGIA MOUNTAIN FOOD BANK
'til no one is hungry

Visit the CareSource Newsroom to stay up-to-date on new information that could impact your community.

If you would like to contact the CareSource Georgia Community Marketing team, please send an email to CommunitySourceGA@caresource.com.

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