Maternal Healthcare in the U.S. and The Role of the Women’s Health Nurse Practitioner (WHNP)

Women’s Health Nurse Practitioners (WHNP-BC)
- Provide holistic care for women/birthing persons before, during, after, and in between pregnancies.
- Are uniquely qualified to address the known contributing factors for preventable maternal mortality and to optimize health outcomes.
- Specialize in high-risk antepartum and postpartum care.
- Their expertise enables them to monitor the health of both the birthing person and baby, provide routine screenings, offer prenatal counseling, address any complications, and promote healthy lifestyle choices.
- Provide comprehensive care to women during pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period.

NPWH advocates for the recognition of WHNPs as integral to the prevention of maternal mortality.

WHNP-BC Scope and Depth of Training as Pertinent to Maternal Mortality

1. WHNP education includes a didactic and clinical curriculum focused on preventive health care for women, and primary and complex care for childbearing persons, including those requiring high-risk antepartum and postpartum care.

2. WHNPs are the clinical experts in providing routine and complex healthcare for childbearing persons, promoting healthy behaviors before, during, and after pregnancy.

3. The WHNP is the only nurse practitioner population focus to hold enumerated competencies in providing high-risk pregnancy and postpartum care.

4. WHNPs identify and mitigate risk factors for maternal health complications before pregnancy; addresses existing risk factors during the reproductive years to optimize maternal health outcomes.

More than 80% of pregnancy-related deaths were preventable, according to 2017-2019 data from Maternal Mortality Review Committees (MMRCs).
Maternal Morbidity & Mortality

Maternal Deaths in the United States
Number of Women Who Died of Maternal Causes in the United States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women Died of Maternal Causes</td>
<td>754</td>
<td>861</td>
<td>1,205</td>
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Incidence & Burden of Disease
The maternal mortality rate for 2021 was 32.9 deaths per 100,000 live births, compared with a rate of 23.8 in 2020 and 20.1 in 2019.¹

Cost of Economic Impact
Maternal mortality costs us $32 billion in healthcare expenditures from conception to age 5 in the U.S.²

Severe maternal morbidity (SMM) is part of this maternal health crisis. As with pregnancy-related deaths, rates of SMM are increasing and racial and ethnic disparities continue.³

Sources:
1 Hoyert DL. Maternal mortality rates in the United States, 2021. NCHS Health E-Stats. 2023. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.15620/cdc;124678