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Preconception Health and Health Care Update

Greetings

This is a monthly communication for individuals interested in improving the health of women and infants through preconception health and health care. We welcome your readership and contributions.



In This Issue

Focus on California

A new website

On the heels of National Women's Health Week, The Preconception Health Council of

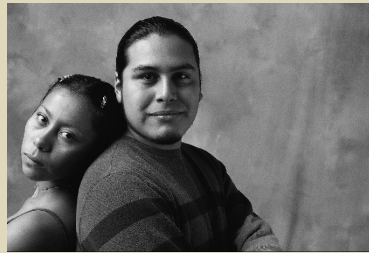
California launched its new preconception health promotion website: [Every Woman California](#).

The Every Woman California website has been designed to provide information for consumers and health care professionals about health considerations for women of reproductive age, whether or not they are planning pregnancy.

[Click here to learn more.](#)

Focus on California: Every Woman, Every Time!

Back in 1993, a national Committee on Perinatal Care released a report, *Toward Improving the Outcome of Pregnancy: The 90s and Beyond*, which made recommendations for improving perinatal health. The report called



for "new strategies to reach each man and woman of childbearing age with reproductive awareness messages" and reproductive health screening. It urged health providers to ask themselves: Is the woman in her reproductive years? If yes, reproductive health education, health promotion, and risk screening should be offered. The goal was set to better serve every woman, every time.

Today, more than 25 years later, this recommendation is starting to gain traction across the country. But, in California, leaders such as Arlene Cullum started back in the 1990s to focus on what we now call strategies to improve preconception health and launched a program called "[Every Woman, Every Time](#)." Working with a grant partnership between Sutter Medical Center in Sacramento and the [California March of Dimes](#) chapter, between 1998 and 2003, the California Preconception Care Initiative. This initiative designed and distributed materials to inform and encourage providers to deliver preconception care through every routine health exam for women of reproductive age. Provider packets offer evidence-based content on preconception health care along with patient fact sheets.

Out of this work and the dedication of many professional leaders across California, a host of projects and organizations have grown that are aimed at improving preconception health and health care. To see a case study of California's overall approach [click here](#).

Retooling Postpartum Visits

ACOG District IX and the March of Dimes California Chapter has just launched the *Interconception Care Project for California* to develop guidelines for the postpartum visit.

An expert stakeholder group has been convened, consisting of members from the Preconception Health Council of California, ACOG District IX, March of Dimes, CA Academy of Family Physicians, local Perinatal Services Coordinators, health plans, and other state and national thought leaders. Dr. Diana Ramos, Medical Director for Family Planning and Maternal Health for the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, is the chairing this effort. Dr. Jeanne Conry of Kaiser Permanente helped guide its development.

Preconception Health Council of California: A Strategic Partnership



The the Preconception Health Council of California was convened in May 2006 with the leadership of the Maternal, Child, and Adolescent Health (MCAH) Program, California Department of Health and the March of Dimes California Chapter. A public-private, statewide forum for planning and decision-making, the Council is composed of key stakeholders in the development of preconception health and health care services in California.

In a few short years, the Council has made substantial achievements. For example:

- In collaboration with CDC and Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), the Council hosted the Second National Summit on Preconception Health and Health Care in Oakland,

CA on October 29-31, 2007.

- The Council has sponsored legislation and fostered awareness of preconception needs among legislators, hosting annual educational events for legislators. Such education led to passage (but veto) in 2007 of Assembly Bill 741 (sponsor Bass) - Infant Mortality: Interpregnancy Care bill would have required the State Department of Public Health to develop a 5-year demonstration program offering interpregnancy care in an effort to improve child spacing and adverse pregnancy outcomes for women who have had a previous very low birth weight delivery.

The leadership of the MCAH Program of the California Department of Health is critical to the success of this and related efforts. MCAH partners with organizations and stakeholders across the state to guide the integration of preconception care into public health practice, develop policy strategies to support preconception care, and promote preconception health messages to women of reproductive age. For example, the [State MCAH Program's Preconception Health and Health Care Initiative](#) sponsored an Action Preconception Health Education Day in May 2008, for health care professionals with interests in preconception health. To learn more about the work of MCAH and public health strategies, visit [their website](#).

LA Best Babies Network: Promoting Preconception Health through Community Partnerships

[LA Best Babies Network](#) is a dynamic network linking more than 100 individuals and organizations dedicated to improving the health of mothers, newborns and their families. It is grounded in the First Five La Healthy Birth Initiative. The Network focuses on the five interrelated strategies of the Healthy Births Initiative: 1) caring for moms to be, 2) improving the quality of perinatal care, 3) creating a network of caregivers and advocates, 4) sharing knowledge and resources, and 5) advancing policies that advance healthy births.

Carrying out a multifaceted strategic action plan, the Network is making a difference in Los Angeles. In 2001 perinatal stakeholders in Los Angeles County came together to discuss the need for coordinated efforts between experts, regions and disciplines to address the needs of pregnant women, fathers and families in Los Angeles County in order to optimize the potential for each child born. They developed a perinatal action plan. For an example of this year's updated plan, [click here](#).

Quality improvement is one approach. For example, the Network was recently awarded a grant from the UniHealth Foundation to improve the quality of postpartum care. A collaborative of 10 clinical sites will focus on gestational diabetes, perinatal depression, breastfeeding and family planning. The grant award will fund resources, tools, training and expert guidance for clinics to develop and sustain systems to provide a continuum of quality care for patients from the prenatal period through the postpartum period.

These efforts have been led by the vision of Dr. Carolina Reyes, principal investigator for LA Best Babies Network. Dr. Lynn Yonekura is Executive Director of the Network.