Providers Step Outside of Healthcare Settings to Support Community Health

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SUMMARY
The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) and National WIC Association (NWA) have teamed up to strengthen referral networks at the community level in order to effectively combat high chronic disease rates in low-income communities. ACOG successfully introduced the joint NWA/ACOG Community Partnerships for Healthy Mothers and Children (CPHMC) Project into the OB/GYN Maintenance of Certification (MOC). This opportunity will ultimately strengthen community-driven projects by encouraging provider involvement.

CHALLENGE
Chronic conditions among women of childbearing age can adversely affect pregnancy outcomes and lead to ongoing complications for mothers and infants. According to the 2005 PRAMS, 7% of women aged 18-44 have asthma, 36% are overweight or obese before pregnancy, 13% are underweight, 3% are hypertensive, and 2% have diabetes. Improving the health of pregnant women and mothers of young children requires a multi-faceted approach of direct service provision alongside policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) changes that make it easier to live a healthy life. However, there is currently an insufficient focus in the US on the need for PSE changes. Healthcare providers may be interested in engaging in PSE improvements, but are prevented from doing so due to a lack of support for this type of work from their workplaces and their professional organizations.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY
If you are a healthcare provider and are interested in engaging in community health projects, please visit our website to learn more: http://www.greaterwithwic.org. You can also contact Anna-Maria Roache, Senior Program Manager at the American College of Obstetricians-Gynecologists to learn more about OB-GYN involvement specifically at aroache@acog.org.

“...provides significant reach for this community based project. ACOG is happy to spread this work throughout its various channels, and is excited to see what the future holds for this project!"

- Anna-Maria Roache

Success Stories
http://nccd.cdc.gov/nccdsuccessstories/
**SOLUTION**

To address this need, NWA is partnering with ACOG and 30 local WIC agencies on the CPHMC project. This 3-year project, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), aims to reduce and prevent chronic disease among pregnant women, mothers, infants, and children by strengthening community/provider relationships, thereby improving access to chronic disease prevention services. In order to increase healthcare provider participation in projects like CPHMC, national project staff at ACOG applied for the inclusion of community-based PSE projects in the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology’s (ABOG’s) Maintenance of Certification (MOC) process.

**SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS**

First, as the MOC recertifies over 5,000 OB/GYN candidates annually, this addition to the MOC process will continue to have significant reach well into the future and beyond the funding period of the CPHMC project. Second, the MOC change signifies a growing awareness among providers of the importance of PSE change and sets a precedent for other provider organizations to follow suit. Third, many of the OB/GYNs and other healthcare providers who are engaged in the CPHMC project plan to continue their participation beyond the project funding period. Fourth and finally, many of the best practices relating to provider engagement will be disseminated to NWA’s and ACOG’s partner groups for replication in other communities.

**RESULTS**

Obstetrician-gynecologists (OB-GYNs) can now become recertified by participating in community health projects like CPHMC. Activities involved in this recertification include serving as an advisor on a community leadership team and participating in community coalition meetings. OB/GYNs and other providers have already begun to actively engage in community projects through CPHMC, resulting in stronger WIC/provider relationships and improved referral networks. More specifically, these partnerships have led to the use of new chronic disease resource guides by 64 healthcare agencies and other organizations and the establishment of new referral infrastructure in over 14 hospitals, primary care providers, and non-profit organizations, potentially reaching over 20,000 people.