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PRESS RELEASE

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### **Severe complications for pregnant Alaskans with high blood pressure reduced in Alaska**

June 3, 2021 ANCHORAGE – An Alaska initiative by six hospitals statewide reports a 28% reduction in severe complications associated with high blood pressure and pregnancy. Over the past two years, the [Alaska Perinatal Quality Collaborative](#) (AKPQC) partnered with the national [Alliance for Innovation on Maternal Health](#) (AIM) Program to implement best practices to improve outcomes for pregnant and birthing Alaskans with high blood pressure.

“Recognition and rapid treatment of severely elevated blood pressures in pregnant people can decrease the chance of complications, such as maternal stroke or brain bleed,” said Dr. Christina Rodriguez, an obstetrics and gynecology specialist in Maternal Fetal Medicine at the Alaska Native Medical Center and the physician clinical lead of this initiative. “This is one component of a larger effort to ensure the safety of Alaska moms and babies.”

High blood pressure during pregnancy is on the rise in Alaska, with high blood pressure disorders contributing to 2 out of the 6 pregnancy-related deaths in Alaska during 2012-16. In 2018, nearly 1 in 20 pregnant persons in Alaska were diagnosed with preeclampsia, a disorder characterized by high blood pressure and signs of damage to other organ systems. Among those births, over 1 in 10 experienced a severe complication.

Hospitals that joined the initiative implemented best practices outlined in the national AIM Severe Hypertension in Pregnancy Patient Safety Bundle to improve the recognition and response to high blood pressure in pregnancy. Best practices included training for providers and nurses, making high blood pressure medications easily accessible and developing systems to debrief and review cases when complications do occur.

The 28% statewide reduction of severe complications among pregnant Alaskans with preeclampsia from 2018 to 2020 exceeded the project’s goals. “The success of this project was largely a result of the collaboration with Alaska Department of Health and Social Services’ Division of Public Health, Section of Women’s, Children’s and Family Health, industry partners, and participating hospitals,” said Danette Schloeder, perinatal clinical specialist at The Children’s Hospital at Providence and the nurse clinical lead of this initiative. “This collaborative

group worked diligently, despite the pandemic, on improving processes because of the overwhelming desire to improve the outcomes of pregnant patients and reduce adverse maternal outcomes.”

Many thanks to the following hospitals that participated in this initiative and collectively reduced severe complications associated with high blood pressure and pregnancy.

- Alaska Native Medical Center
- Alaska Regional Hospital
- Bartlett Regional Hospital
- Fairbanks Memorial Hospital
- The Children’s Hospital at Providence
- Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation

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