

Racial Disparities in Maternal Health: African-American Mothers at a Disproportionate Risk for Maternal Mortality and Morbidity in the US

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Abstract

Fayetteville State University (FSU) Student Nurses' Association's (SNA) Breakthrough to Nursing (BTN) launched a social media campaign to highlight racial disparities in maternal health. As future nurses it is imperative we advocate for our patients and listen to their concerns. Statistics of maternal morbidity and mortality for Black, American Indian, and Alaska Native people of color (POC) were used in the poster to show the outcomes that result. To better serve disparaged patients it is important to understand the barriers that exist for POC and the outcomes that result from them.

Introduction

Over the past thirty years there has been a steady rise in maternal mortality in the US with an estimated 50% of maternal deaths being preventable (Trojano & Witcher, 2018). African-American mothers in the US are at a disproportionate risk for death related to childbirth compared to white women (Amankwaa et al., 2018). To improve maternal outcomes, health professionals undergo training to prevent discrimination and training on implicit bias and health equity (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2020). Racial Disparities in maternal health was named the November topic for the National Student Nurses' Association's (NSNA) BTN. FSU SNA's BTN launched a social media campaign to increase awareness of the racial disparities that exist in maternal health. Emphasis was placed on statistics showing health inequity and differences in outcomes for maternal morbidity and mortality for POC compared to white women.

Results

On November 15, 2020 FSU SNA posted a trio of graphics (Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3) on social media platforms captioned "FSU SNA's Breakthrough to Nursing is spotlighting a very important topic – racial disparities in maternal health. As future nurses, it is imperative that we advocate for our patients and listen to their concerns." This post launched the social media campaign and focused on the NSNA BTN topic for the month. The goal of the post was to engage with student nurses and nursing faculty at FSU. The post was shared on Instagram and Instagram story where it initially reached sixty students and faculty. The post was shared on student nurses' stories, increasing exposure and engagement. The post was shared in our Facebook group where it reached 134 student nurses and nursing faculty members. There was a positive response to the post through comments, 'likes,' and 'loves' on the post.

Conclusion

SNA's social media campaign reached a large population of FSU's student nurses and nursing school faculty. This project provided engagement and education on racial disparities in maternal health. This project increased understanding of the difference in outcomes for maternal morbidity and mortality for POC compared to white women. Education of healthcare professionals and increased awareness of racial disparities in maternal health can help improve maternal outcomes.

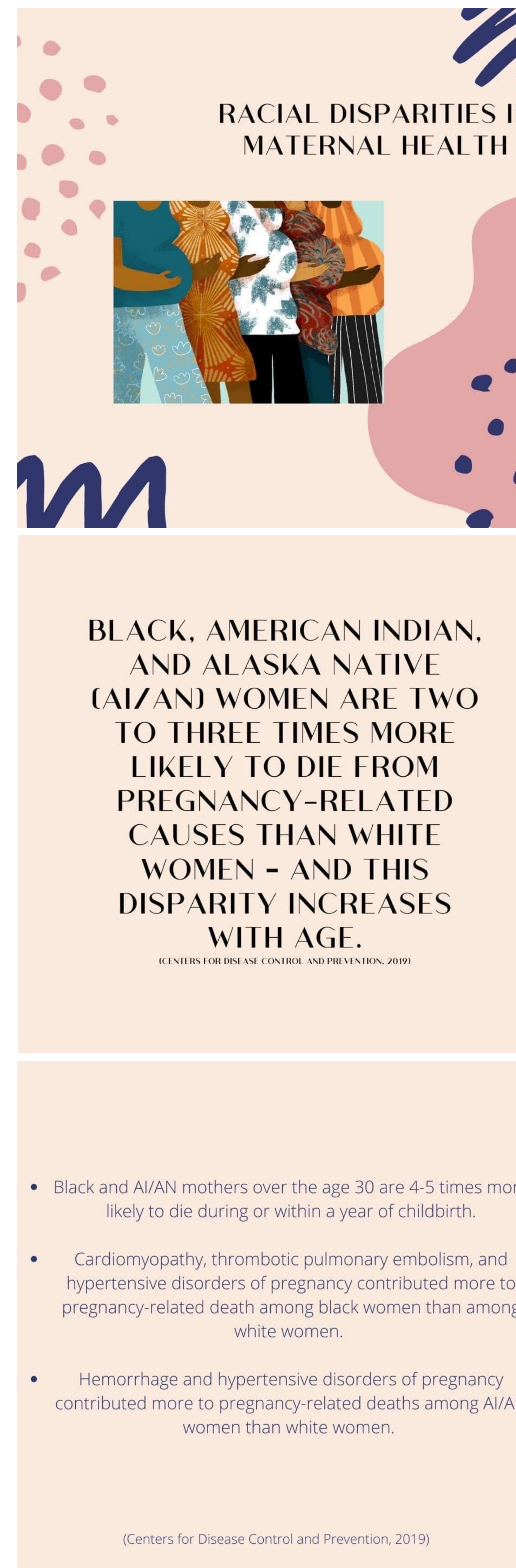


Figure 1. FSU SNA Social Media Campaign

Future Implications

There should be a continued effort to educate student nurses and healthcare professionals on diversity, disparities, cultural competence, and recognition of implicit bias. Health inequity is multifaceted, but the healthcare professional has a responsibility to their patients to use best practices to improve maternal health. To do this, healthcare professionals must train to prevent discrimination in care in an effort to improve maternal mortality and morbidity health outcomes. Projects such as the SNA social media campaign help encourage conversation about inequalities in healthcare in an effort to break down barriers and work towards social justice.

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