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Health Care Disparities Among Wisconsin Women Must Be Eliminated
Women of Color Often Face More Obstacles to Obtaining Health Care

Madison –The Wisconsin Alliance for Women’s Health (WAWH) closes out National Women’s Health Week by raising awareness of the health care disparities that exist among Wisconsin women. While U.S. women’s health status has generally improved over the past few decades, health disparities among different racial and ethnic groups remain large. Women of color often face obstacles in obtaining health care due to linguistic and logistical barrier, cultural differences, and race and sex-based stereotypes.

“Women in general are struggling to access and afford health care these days, yet women of color are disproportionately affected in Wisconsin, notes WAWH Director Sara Finger. “We must work to remove barriers that prevent all Wisconsin women from accessing and affording the quality health care they need and deserve.”

The National Women’s Law Center [Report Card on Women’s Health](#) pointed out that lack of health insurance is a problem for many women, but all the more so for women of color — for example, while 18 percent of all women in the United States are uninsured, nearly 38 percent of Hispanic women are without insurance.

The report card also points out that women disproportionately suffer the consequences of unprotected sexual activity, such as unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections — but Black women are at especially high risk for both, especially HIV/AIDS. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender women of color, at the intersection of two minority communities, suffer from particularly severe health disparities.

In Wisconsin, the most disturbing health disparity is the persistent high death rate of infants born to African American women. Infants born to African American women in Wisconsin have been 3-4 times more likely to die before their first birthday than infants born to white women. Further, during the past 20 years, virtually no decline has occurred in Wisconsin’s African American infant mortality rate. Compared to white infant mortality, disparities also exist among American Indian, Laotian/Hmong and Hispanic populations, although these disparities are smaller than those of African Americans.

“To alleviate racial and ethnic discrepancies in Wisconsin women’s health, we can develop and support policies that reduce barriers to minority women’s access to health resources such as health insurance, preventive care, screenings for disease, and multilingual health care providers.” states Finger. “To truly raise the status of Wisconsin health, we must ensure that all Wisconsin women can access appropriate health care.”

To learn more information, link to the [WAWH Health Disparities Information Page](#).

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*The mission of the Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health (WAWH) is to advance women's health by creating an environment in which the public and elected officials confidently support women's health policy.
To learn more about WAWH, visit our website: www.supportwomenshealth.org*