



NEWS RELEASE

Merck Announces Call for Proposals for Second Cohort of Safer Childbirth Cities, Expanding Maternal Health Support Across US Cities

6/15/2020

Building on Merck for Mothers' Efforts, Initiative Bolsters Support for Locally Created Solutions to Improve Maternal Health and Narrow Disparities During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond

KENILWORTH, N.J.--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- Merck (NYSE:MRK), known as MSD outside the United States and Canada, announced today it was expanding its Safer Childbirth Cities initiative, a multi-year effort to improve U.S. maternal health outcomes. Safer Childbirth Cities is part of Merck for Mothers, the company's \$500 million global initiative to help create a world where no woman has to die giving life. With the latest call for proposals, Safer Childbirth Cities aims to add to current efforts in 10 cities by expanding geographically to other U.S. cities and catalyzing solutions that will have the greatest impact on vulnerable populations in U.S. maternal health.

The U.S. is the only high-income country where **maternal mortality** is on the rise. According to the **CDC**, Black, American Indian, and Alaska Native women are two to three times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than White women. These racial disparities are stark and persistent, and further heightened by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. **Maternal mortality review committees** across the U.S. found that maternal mortality is not just a medical issue. Community factors - the conditions in which people live and work - contribute to poor maternal health outcomes.

Launched in October 2018 by Merck for Mothers, Safer Childbirth Cities supports community-based organizations in U.S. cities with a high burden of maternal mortality and morbidity to implement locally responsive, evidence-



based interventions and test innovative approaches to help their cities become safer – and more equitable – places to give birth.

Merck for Mothers is now inviting organizations to apply for funding as part of the second cohort of Safer Childbirth Cities. Projects funded by Safer Childbirth Cities are intended to help cities establish specific goals to improve maternal health based on identified community needs, advance evidence-informed solutions to meet these goals, and track progress by demonstrating impact with their population.

The deadline for proposals is Aug. 24, 2020. Upon review of proposals by an expert committee, a limited number of applicants will be selected to receive grants of up to \$1 million over 2-3 years; recipients will be announced in late 2020. More information about Safer Childbirth Cities and the application process and eligibility may be found [here](#).

To date, Merck for Mothers and a growing group of co-funders have provided Safer Childbirth Cities grants in 10 cities as part of the first cohort to improve maternal health and promote health equity: Atlanta, GA; Baltimore, MD; Camden, NJ; Chicago, IL; Columbus, OH; Jackson, MS; Newark, NJ; New Orleans, LA; Philadelphia, PA and Pittsburgh, PA. Community-based coalitions in each of these cities are leading holistic approaches to support women before, during and after childbirth to help improve maternal health outcomes.

“Community organizations form the frontline of women’s health, but all too often struggle to find the support they need. Our first grantees have already demonstrated that strong local leadership, a woman-centered approach and coordinated action can translate promising ideas about how to reduce maternal health disparities into meaningful patient impact,” said Dr. Julie L. Gerberding, chief patient officer at Merck. “By supporting these critical organizations, we hope to help strengthen maternal health systems, improve the quality of maternal health care and ensure women are getting the support they need throughout their pregnancy and childbirth journey.”

“The COVID-19 pandemic has increased our collective understanding of how social and community factors can drive poor health outcomes. Through Safer Childbirth Cities, our aim continues to be to fuel broad-based action that improves health equity by addressing the effects of systemic racism and ensuring all women have access to respectful, high quality maternal care and support,” said Dr. Mary-Ann Etiebet, lead and executive director of Merck for Mothers.

Safer Childbirth Cities builds on Merck for Mothers’ investments to help make pregnancy and childbirth safer in the U.S., including during COVID-19. In total, Merck has contributed more than \$30 million to COVID-19 relief efforts thus far, \$10 million of which has been committed to support COVID-19 relief efforts to help disparately impacted patients and communities in the U.S. and globally and \$3 million committed to help health systems tackling COVID-19 better meet the needs of pregnant women before, during and following delivery.

About Merck

For more than 125 years, Merck, known as MSD outside of the United States and Canada, has been inventing for life, bringing forward medicines and vaccines for many of the world's most challenging diseases in pursuit of our mission to save and improve lives. We demonstrate our commitment to patients and population health by increasing access to health care through far-reaching policies, programs and partnerships. Today, Merck continues to be at the forefront of research to prevent and treat diseases that threaten people and animals – including cancer, infectious diseases such as HIV and Ebola, and emerging animal diseases – as we aspire to be the premier research-intensive biopharmaceutical company in the world. For more information, visit www.merck.com and connect with us on **Twitter**, **Facebook**, **Instagram**, **YouTube** and **LinkedIn**.

About Merck for Mothers

Merck for Mothers is our company's \$500 million initiative to help create a world where no woman has to die giving life. Applying Merck's business and scientific resources, we collaborate with partners to improve the health and well-being of women during pregnancy, childbirth and the postpartum period. For more information, visit www.merckformothers.com.

Forward-Looking Statement of Merck & Co., Inc., Kenilworth, N.J., USA

This news release of Merck & Co., Inc., Kenilworth, N.J., USA (the "company") includes "forward-looking statements" within the meaning of the safe harbor provisions of the U.S. Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. These statements are based upon the current beliefs and expectations of the company's management and are subject to significant risks and uncertainties. If underlying assumptions prove inaccurate or risks or uncertainties materialize, actual results may differ materially from those set forth in the forward-looking statements.

Risks and uncertainties include but are not limited to, general industry conditions and competition; general economic factors, including interest rate and currency exchange rate fluctuations; the impact of the recent global outbreak of novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19); the impact of pharmaceutical industry regulation and health care legislation in the United States and internationally; global trends toward health care cost containment; technological advances, new products and patents attained by competitors; challenges inherent in new product development, including obtaining regulatory approval; the company's ability to accurately predict future market conditions; manufacturing difficulties or delays; financial instability of international economies and sovereign risk; dependence on the effectiveness of the company's patents and other protections for innovative products; and the exposure to litigation, including patent litigation, and/or regulatory actions.

The company undertakes no obligation to publicly update any forward-looking statement, whether as a result of new information, future events or otherwise. Additional factors that could cause results to differ materially from those described in the forward-looking statements can be found in the company's 2019 Annual Report on Form 10-

K and the company's other filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) available at the SEC's Internet site (www.sec.gov).

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Source: Merck & Co., Inc.