



NEWS RELEASE

Merck Announces “Safer Childbirth Cities” Initiative, Issues Call to Action to Reverse the Rise in U.S. Maternal Deaths

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Merck for Mothers Commits Additional \$10M to Support Locally Created Solutions to Improve Maternal Health and Reduce Disparities

KENILWORTH, N.J.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Merck (NYSE:MRK), known as MSD outside the United States and Canada, announced today a new effort to support cities across the country to help women have a healthy pregnancy and safe childbirth. The “Safer Childbirth Cities” initiative is intended to reduce the number of maternal deaths and life-threatening childbirth events and narrow disparities in maternal health outcomes in the U.S. “Safer Childbirth Cities” is part of **Merck for Mothers**, Merck’s global initiative to end preventable deaths of women from complications related to pregnancy and childbirth. Building on its earlier investments to reduce maternal mortality in the U.S., Merck for Mothers is committing an additional \$10m to improve maternal health across the country.

Through the “Safer Childbirth Cities” initiative, Merck for Mothers will provide grants to help cities with poor maternal health outcomes develop and implement creative, multi-sector solutions to save women’s lives, improve maternal health and narrow disparities. The vision is that these grants will catalyze additional financial and other resources to make these cities – and others across the country – safer and more equitable places to give birth.

Although maternal death rates have declined globally over the past 25 years, the U.S. is one of the only high-income countries where maternal mortality is on the rise. An estimated 60 percent of these deaths are preventable, and for every maternal death, nearly 100 women suffer a life-threatening complication during pregnancy and childbirth, often with long-term health consequences. Furthermore, staggering racial disparities in maternal health persist: a

Black woman is 3-4 times more likely to die than a White woman.

“It’s unacceptable that women are dying during pregnancy and childbirth from causes we can prevent,” said Dr. Julie L. Gerberding, Chief Patient Officer at Merck. “We are encouraged by the growing attention to this public health problem and the potential to have an even greater impact on women’s lives by working closely with local communities across the country.”

Merck for Mothers’ **efforts to improve maternal health in the U.S.** include supporting the CDC to create the country’s first **multi-state report** on why these deaths are occurring; **evidence-based practices** to respond to childbirth emergencies in states across the country; **state-based reviews of maternal deaths**; the first city-wide **analysis of maternal morbidity**; and grassroots programs that link pregnant women with chronic diseases (including diabetes, hypertension, obesity and behavioral health conditions) to integrated care.

“Merck has played a catalytic role in drawing attention to the tragedy of maternal mortality in the U.S. and, more importantly, is helping to find solutions that will ensure equitable access to care for women during pregnancy and beyond,” Dr. Joia Crear-Perry, founder of the National Birth Equity Initiative.

“These deaths represent many failures – not just unsafe medical care but also inadequate social support in our communities. The “Safer Childbirth Cities” initiative will help break down silos between sectors to save women’s lives,” said Dr. Neel Shah, Assistant Professor of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Biology at Harvard Medical School, and director of the Delivery Decisions Initiative at Ariadne Labs.

“It’s essential that we listen to women, respect their experiences and act on what we hear,” states Christy Turlington Burns, Founder and CEO of Every Mother Counts. “Solutions will only be effective at improving maternal health if they are informed by women’s experiences, values, and needs.”

“City-based coalitions work. Here in Camden, New Jersey, we’ve reached across sectors to ensure that pregnant women get the support they need for a healthy pregnancy,” said Kathleen Noonan, CEO of the Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers – a community-based organization leading Camden Delivers that links women of reproductive age to prenatal care and beyond. “The evidence-based interventions that we need to turn the tide on maternal mortality are going to come from cities.”

Merck for Mothers plans to support a broad geographic range of cities across the country through grants ranging from \$500,000-\$1 million to develop cross-sector coalitions, implement evidence-informed interventions and stimulate creative solutions to improve maternal health in their communities.

“We are excited to continue to raise awareness about maternal mortality, and more importantly, move from

awareness to action and impact,” said Dr. Mary-Ann Etiebet, Lead and Executive Director of Merck for Mothers.

More information about “Safer Childbirth Cities” initiative and the application process can be found **here**.

To learn more about maternal mortality in the U.S., watch Merck for Mothers’ **new film**, **read the e-report** and get involved with an emerging coalition of maternal health advocates.

About Merck

For more than a century, Merck, a leading global biopharmaceutical company 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. Through our prescription medicines, vaccines, biologic therapies and animal health products, we work with customers and operate in more than 140 countries to deliver innovative health solutions. We also demonstrate our commitment to increasing access to health care through far-reaching policies, programs and partnerships. Today, Merck continues to be at the forefront of research to advance the prevention and treatment of diseases that threaten people and communities around the world - including cancer, cardio-metabolic diseases, emerging animal diseases, Alzheimer’s disease and infectious diseases including HIV and Ebola. For more information, visit **www.merck.com** and connect with us on **Twitter**, **Facebook**, **Instagram**, **YouTube** and **LinkedIn**.

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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 2017 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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