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OHIO STATE-LED SUPPORT PROGRAM SUGGESTS A REDUCTION IN PRETERM BIRTH AND INFANT MORTALITY

COLUMBUS, Ohio – New research suggests a unique program called [Moms2B](#) at [The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center](#) shows a reduction in adverse pregnancy outcomes in communities disproportionately affected by these public health issues.

The study, led by researchers [Courtney Lynch](#) and Erinn Hade and published in the [Journal of Maternal and Child Health](#), indicates that women who attended at least two Moms2B sessions may have lower rates of preterm birth, low birth weight and infant mortality compared to women who only received individual care.

“When we started the program 10 years ago, the infant mortality rate was as high as 19 per 1,000 births in some of these neighborhoods. Now it’s down to 10 per 1,000,” said [Dr. Patricia Gabbe](#), founder and director of the Moms2B program and pediatrician at the Ohio State Wexner Medical Center. “This kind of success has never happened before and wouldn’t be possible without our community collaborations.”

More than 22,000 babies die before their first birthday each year in the U.S. and the infant mortality rate is twice as high among Black babies compared to white babies. However, experts say many of these deaths are preventable, and prevention starts with taking care of expectant mothers and empowering them to deliver full-term, healthy babies.

“For too long, we’ve relied on obstetricians and pediatricians to tackle this public health problem, and it hasn’t worked. So instead, we went into these at-risk neighborhoods and talked to women about the challenges they face, what they want to learn and the services they need,” Gabbe said. “We learned that things like housing, food insecurity and child care are huge barriers for these women, and it was a big help when deciding where to concentrate our efforts.”

Moms2B approaches prenatal and postnatal health in a new way, integrating education, services and support directly in affected neighborhoods. The program continues to grow, providing more than 2,500 women with lessons on pregnancy and parenting, access to social and medical services and a healthy meal at every session.

“The most important thing I’ve learned is the importance of keeping your stress down when you’re pregnant,” said Monya Wilson, Moms2B participant and mother of five. “Throughout my pregnancy, having support like Moms2B makes you feel like things aren’t that hard because they’re right there with you. It makes me want to keep coming back, and helped me have healthy pregnancies.”

Moms2B educates through a multidisciplinary team approach. Health care professionals, including doctors, nurses, social workers, dietitians, lactation counselors, navigators, community health workers and health care students, listen and learn from everyone attending Moms2B.

“Not only are we able to teach moms through this program, but the moms also teach us about the barriers this population faces,” Gabbe said. “If health care professionals are more informed about the obstacles expectant mothers need to overcome, we can better help them have healthy pregnancies and babies.”

Gabbe and her team are working with partners across the country to expand the success of Moms2B to more cities and neighborhoods to help improve the health of at-risk moms and babies and lower the national infant mortality rate.

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