

# International Call to Action for Preeclampsia Prevention and Treatment

## **Vision and Goals**

#### The Vision

To advance the health and well-being of all pregnant women by creating critical partnerships at all levels of society for the prevention and treatment of preeclampsia and related disorders and to increase awareness about preeclampsia's impact on pre-term birth and maternal and infant mortality.

#### The Goals

To promote prenatal health and well being
To discover interventions that save lives and reduce health care costs
To eliminate health disparities

As a force for change the *Call To Action* urges that stakeholders unite and chart a course to better understand, develop interventions and eradicate this life-threatening complication of pregnancy. Preeclampsia must have a presence in all health policy agendas set at local, state, national and international levels.

# **Actions**

Each of the six actions below serve as a call to action for those who are in a position to act—community leaders, volunteers, health care professionals, patients, research investigators, policymakers, and other concerned parties. The actions serve as a specific call to action for governments and health systems to bring their organizational mandates and foster change.

## 1. Change Perceptions of Preeclampsia

Call upon governments and health systems to recognize the importance of preventing and treating these disorders

For too long, preeclampsia has been marginalized by governments and health systems. This is mainly due to lack of understanding about the disorder – what it is, the consequences to mother and unborn baby, and the associated health care costs. An effort must be in place to change perceptions about preeclampsia and improve awareness by:

- Informing policymakers and administrators at local, state, national and international levels of current preeclampsia statistics and the current and real effect on their constituencies.
- Developing concise and relevant messages for policymakers.
- Documenting the health and quality-of-life outcomes that result from prevention and access to care and the ultimate effect on health care expenditures.

#### 2. Build the Science Base and Accelerate Science Translation and Dissemination

Encourage additional research funding into preeclampsia and related disorders

Preeclampsia and related conditions affect approximately 5-8 percent of all pregnancies and is the leading cause of maternal and infant mortality, especially in developing countries where prenatal care and technologies are less available. Despite this, the cause is unknown and its only known cure, delivery of the baby regardless of gestational age, makes it the second leading cause of premature births.

In September 2010, the U.S. National Institutes of Health, Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH) released a revised agenda for the next generation of women's health and sex/gender research in the United States – *A Vision for 2020 for Women's Health Research: Moving into the Future With New Dimensions and Strategies*. The agenda states that "a major goal of biomedical research is to create knowledge that will lead to more accurate strategies for diagnosis, and preventive and therapeutic interventions, thereby ushering in a new era of personalized medicine." The ORWH outlines that more work is needed to encourage research on safe and effective interventions for conditions affecting pregnant women; and research should be expanded on pregnancy-related conditions, including preeclampsia.

#### Specific research actions include:

- Conduct biological and clinical research on causative factors that lead to preeclampsia and related conditions.
- Conduct intervention studies and health services research aimed at understanding how prevention can improve pregnancy outcomes in relation to preeclampsia and how to target populations to ensure effectiveness.

#### Specific translation actions include:

- Translate basic research on preeclampsia into clinical interventions, health care services and effective policies
- Communicate research findings to the public, clearly describing behaviors and actions that promote health and well-being.
- Determine the effect that improved understanding of preeclampsia has in statistically reducing the condition.
- Utilize research findings to design the curricula, write the textbooks, and teach the classes that prepare the next generation of health care providers.

### 3. Improve Patient Awareness

Prioritize patient education and treatment for these disorders

It's important the women and families who have direct experience with preeclampsia and its effect on health and well being be mobilized to help educate the broader community about this debilitating condition. There are several strategies for increasing patient awareness and creating communities of educated consumers who can take charge of their health care needs and ensure adequate access to preventive and therapeutic health care services. Such strategies include:

- Enhance health care literacy in relation to pregnancy care and how to prevent or treat preeclampsia and the importance of doing so.
- Develop messages that are culturally sensitive and persuasive.

## 4. Improve Provider Awareness

Prioritize education, training and access to medical resources for health care providers

Change health providers' perceptions and knowledge of preeclampsia and its effect on health and well being must be improved. This includes increased awareness for primary care providers, medical specialists and allied health providers who all care for pregnant women. Such strategies include:

- Reviewing and updating health professional educational curricula and continuing education courses to include up-to-date information on preeclampsia prevention and treatment
- Promoting interdisciplinary training of medical and allied health professional personnel in counseling patients about how to reduce the risk of preeclampsia and receive care to address the condition.
- Working to ensure health care information is available to providers who work with health departments and international, federal, state, and local government programs.

## 5. Overcome Barriers by Replicating Effective Programs and Proven Efforts

Address prevention through a better understanding of the causes and through access to appropriate, safe and effective treatments

Health disparities are associated with populations whose access to health care services is compromised. Several factors affect ones access to care or services, including poverty, insurance coverage, geographic isolation, or limited education or language skills.

Strategies can and should be implemented to overcome barriers to care and eliminate health disparities, particularly to those pregnant women who are most at risk of preeclampsia. Such strategies can include:

- Enhancing health promotion and health literacy and an understanding of what preeclampsia is and how to improve health and well being during pregnancy.
- Encouraging collaborations with research, provider, patient and education communities through joint workshops aimed at health promotion and awareness of available services.
- Assessing health programs that have demonstrated improvement in access to care and identify best models of practice.
- Ensuring coverage of simple diagnostic tests and blood pressure monitoring equipment to detect and diagnose preeclampsia.
- Ensuring coverage of pharmaceuticals meant to address and control preeclampsia.
- Ensuring an adequate number of providers (and culturally competent providers) are available to meet the needs within communities, particularly in health professional shortage areas.

#### 6. Increase Collaborations

Encourage and increase collaborations and partnerships between the public and private sectors

The private sector and public sector and the global health community must work together to reduce maternal and infant illness and death in the developing world and enhance awareness about the consequences of preeclampsia. Partnering is critical to all strategies in the Call to Action. Strategies can include:

- Building coalitions of stakeholders who make up the community of those vested in addressing preeclampsia.
- Developing partnerships that are community-based, cross-disciplinary, and culturally sensitive.
- Evaluating, reporting and documenting best practices and outcomes from research and activities.