A $500 million initiative was announced today by Merck, a global healthcare leader, at the UN's *Every Woman Every Child* – a global effort to improve the health of women and children. "Merck for Mothers" will focus on the two leading causes of maternal mortality (excessive and uncontrolled bleeding after childbirth, known as post-partum hemorrhage, and life-threatening high blood pressure during pregnancy, known as preeclampsia) as well as family planning, which is known to play an important role in reducing maternal mortality.

As stated in their press release , "Merck's new initiative is grounded in intense listening and learning and in transparent collaboration with healthcare workers and experts on the front lines." Based on input from more than 100 experts in the field, Merck developed a strategic framework identifying where the company will focus its people and resources. Preeclampsia Foundation Executive Director Eleni Z. Tsigas was one of 17 experts who participated in a forum hosted by Merck to provide input on the greatest issues and challenges facing maternal-infant health.

"It was extremely gratifying to participate in this working session with global leaders in maternal and infant health, and to hear others advocate a similar call-to-action for preeclampsia as an issue that has lived in the shadows of the maternal health movement for too long," said Tsigas. "I was speaking on behalf of the Preeclampsia Foundation, but our voice was not the lone cry for help."

Merck's commitment to preeclampsia is promising on several fronts, explained Tsigas. "We are hopeful that some of the near term issues associated with advocacy and access to care can be addressed with their global resources, but also that their R&D expertise can be applied to the more challenging, but longer term solution of finding a cure."

Merck has also generously stepped forward as a sponsor for *Saving Grace – A Night of Hope and Gratitude* in New York City on Nov. 12.

Hear more about the global maternal health crisis from scientist, academic, hospital and global healthcare company executive, Michael Rosenblatt, M.D., executive vice president and chief medical officer at Merck.