

Surgeon General's Conference on the  
Prevention of Preterm Birth

# CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

**Chair**

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*March of Dimes Foundation*



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## **Purpose of the PREEMIE Act**

- Reduce rates of preterm labor and delivery
- Work toward an evidence-based standard of care for pregnant women at risk of preterm labor or other serious complications, and for infants born preterm and at a low birthweight
- Reduce infant mortality and disabilities caused by prematurity

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## Research Agenda

- Conduct basic research to understand the mechanisms of parturition and preterm birth, building on current knowledge and encouraging new, creative approaches
- Identify the causes of the rise in preterm birth, including the etiology of late preterm birth and health disparities

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## Research Agenda

- Conduct multidisciplinary (and transdisciplinary) research and develop interventions to reduce racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic health disparities
- Examine how psychosocial and environmental factors translate into biological responses that contribute to preterm birth
- Conduct research on clinical management of late preterm birth, identifying risks and benefits to mother and fetus and focusing on mortality and morbidity as outcomes

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## Research Agenda

- Promote research incorporating a life course perspective encompassing psychosocial, behavioral, environmental, and other factors that impact on preterm birth
- Improve funding to fulfill these goals and create multidisciplinary research centers dedicated to understanding prevention of preterm birth

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## Research Agenda

- Build capacity to perform research and clinical innovation by training physician scientists and social scientists to address these issues

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## Data Needs

- Fully implement a national vital records system, including:
  - Common data elements and definitions
  - New electronic birth certificate data
  - Timely reporting
  - Excellent data quality and consistency

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## Data Needs

- Create new systems to collect data to understand impact of assisted reproductive technologies (ART) and ovulation stimulation on preterm birth, to improve singleton pregnancy rates from ovulation promotion and induction and ART

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## Clinical Practice

- Educate health care professionals to:
  - Promote patient-centered practice
  - Better identify risk factors to reduce the risk of preterm birth
  - Understand mechanisms of preterm birth
  - Communicate with patients about preconception care, risks for preterm birth, and reproductive health planning

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## Clinical Practice

- Provide social support services (e.g., social work, domestic violence, substance use, mental health) to women and families at risk for preterm birth
- Provide long-term follow up and support programs for patients and families affected by preterm birth

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## Health Services and Quality of Care

- Align payment for clinical services with evidence-based practices for both public and private payers (e.g., smoking cessation, first trimester ultrasound)
- Develop and implement quality measures for systems and practitioners for preterm birth prevention and clinical care
- Use professional guidelines to encourage clinicians to adopt best practices in preventing prematurity

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## Communication Efforts

- Develop a national communication strategy and program to increase awareness about preterm birth for the general public and policy and decision makers
  - Include a national effort to increase awareness of risk factors for preterm birth among women of childbearing age and specific high-risk groups
  - Assure messages are culturally aware and health literacy appropriate

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## Conclusions

- Prevention of preterm birth must be a national priority
- Achieving the goals of this plan will require the resources for broad-based research, capacity building, data systems, creating interventions, quality initiatives, and a comprehensive communications strategy

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## Conclusions

- This proposed action plan should be implemented by federal, local, non-profit, and other organizations and foundations working in partnership over the long term
- Healthy People 2020 should include a comprehensive set of goals and objectives related to preterm birth

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## Conclusions

- The Interagency Coordinating Council on Prematurity, established by the PREEMIE Act, should monitor and report on progress on fulfilling these proposed goals and action plan to reduce preterm labor and delivery