

Session Descriptions

Thursday morning plenaries and workshops

Keynote: Integrating Mental Health into Ob/Gyn Care In this plenary session, **Dr. Catherine Monk**, Director of the Center for the Transition to Parenthood and Women’s Mental Health Division Chief in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Columbia University, will present the WMH@Ob/Gyn model—a financially sustainable and scalable approach that embeds mental health services within obstetric and gynecological practices while emphasizing culturally-responsive and data-driven care. Established in 2019, the model integrates mental health experts as direct hires within Ob/Gyn clinics, providing psychotherapy and psychopharmacology, primarily via telehealth, while leveraging existing administrative infrastructure to deliver insurance-based mental healthcare for women who might otherwise be unable to access or afford it. Dr. Monk will highlight program structure, virtual and in-person care modalities, utilization trends, clinical outcomes, and strategies for staffing, financial sustainability, and outreach to historically marginalized populations.

Plenary 2: New York State Title V Program Assessment to Action: Comprehensive Statewide Needs

Assessment and 2025-2030 State Action Plan Overview **Kirsten Siegenthaler, PhD**, Director of the Division of Family Health & the NYS Title V program, NYS Dept. of Health will provide an overview of the recently completed statewide comprehensive needs assessment and the 2025-2030 State Action Plan. During the session, she will share the details, objectives, strategies, and measurable targets aligned with these priorities across the five Title V population domains and how this plan will be used to guide policy strategies and/or actions to advance maternal and child health in New York State. [The Division of Family Health (DFH) leads Title V activities, providing department-wide leadership on MCH and collaborating across programs, managing many MCH public health programs and ensuring MCH needs are addressed through policy and cross-sector partnerships.]

Thursday AM Concurrent workshops

From Silos to Synergy: Understanding the Impact of SMM and Developing a comprehensive Obstetric and Neonatal Training Program in WNY **Michelle Szeffler, Obstetrical Outreach Coordinator & Ashley LaBruno, Neonatal Intensive Care Unit Nurse** from Kaleida Health, Oishei Children’s Hospital, Buffalo, NY will review the basis for – and development of a combined obstetric and neonatal curriculum grounded in AIM, NRP, CMQCC, the Safe Motherhood Initiative, and the realities of rural practice. They will describe how they bring didactics, hands-on drills, emergency delivery kits, and in-situ simulations to ED teams, EMS crews, and perinatal units across the region. They will share how they teach shoulder dystocia next to neonatal resuscitation, postpartum hemorrhage alongside PPV and chest compressions – all mirroring the real world—one team caring for one dyad. This program bridges gaps, strengthens readiness, and gives frontline teams the confidence and skills to care for birthing persons and newborns wherever they arrive. In a region where access is shrinking, collaboration has become our most powerful tool. **[This session will also be offered Friday am.]**

Trauma-Informed Care in Perinatal Systems - Marc Merchant, Program Manager, Healthy Families Chautauqua @ Jamestown Community Learning Council will discuss trauma-informed care as a universal framework that can be applied across medical, home visiting, and community-based perinatal settings. He will review how individual, medical, and structural trauma can influence engagement, trust, and outcomes during the perinatal period, with particular attention to how trauma may present as missed appointments, guarded behavior, or perceived “noncompliance.” Emphasis will be placed on understanding trauma through the lens of impact rather than intent and recognizing the perinatal period as a critical opportunity for intervention and support. He will showcase practical application through a perinatal case example.

The Fourth Trimester Fog: a Practical Guide to Perinatal Mental Health for Providers and Parents - Jennifer Williams, LCPC, PMH-C, R-PLC intends to showcase how multidisciplinary perinatal teams can use the clinical framework, communication tools, and culturally responsive strategies to catch PMADs earlier, and actually do something about them. Drawing on clinical practice and the Pass Go Regulation Method™, this workshop equips perinatal providers, care coordinators, and community health workers with practical tools for identifying PMADs early, communicating across disciplines, and building sustainable support structures for the families they serve. Special attention is given to Black, Indigenous, and LGBTQ+ birthing people, populations that face compounded barriers to perinatal mental health care and who are too often left out of the clinical conversation entirely.

Birth Defects Surveillance in New York State - Amanda St. Louis, MS; Sarah Fisher, PhD, Adrian Michalski, MPH, Staff at the New York State Birth Defects Registry (BDR) will give an overview of birth defect surveillance operations in NYS. The BDR is the best source of information about birth defects in children born or residing in New York and it is one of the largest statewide population-based birth defects registries in the United States. By monitoring birth defects, registry staff identify and investigate unusual patterns of birth defects throughout New York and study suspected causes. They will present examples of how the data are used, and provide a demonstration of the NYS BDR Data Dashboard with publicly accessible information on birth defects. They will share how de-identified registry data are available for public use in research projects, advocacy efforts, and to inform public health programming.

Integrating Perinatal Mental Health Screening and Support into Family Connects' Community Resource Network for Pregnant & Parenting Families - Camille Tinder, LMSW, MPH; Ashley Powell, LMSW; Karen Ann Amin, LCSW from Public Health Solutions will share information on their Enhanced Perinatal Mental Health Spectrum of Support (EMPATHS) model which provides a spectrum of mental health support to pregnant and postpartum families through enhanced mental health screening and connection to community and clinically based mental health support across NYC. EMPATHS in connection with the WholeYouNYC Social Care Network, screening is integrated into the workflow for a team of 20 Pregnancy & Parenting Navigators in Family Connect (FC). Pregnant and parenting individuals are connected to a spectrum of supportive services including individual counseling, outpatient programs, substance use treatment, prenatal and postpartum peer support groups, and more. They will provide a brief overview of why PHS developed a community resource network approach specific to maternal mental health and what the EMPATHS structure is and share performance data following 1 year of implementation and lessons learned. They will also share a collaborative mapping exercise for workshop participants to brainstorm a spectrum model approach in their service community.

Integrating Doulas into Maternal Health Systems: Applying Community Health Worker Model to Strengthen Perinatal Care – Through this workshop **Christine Hernandez, Doula, CHW** from St. Peter's Health Partners, will discuss their model that positions doulas and CHWs as parallel frontline public health workforces and will share how established CHW system-integration models can guide the sustainable incorporation of doulas into clinical and community perinatal care structures. Emphasis will be placed on how doulas address social determinants of health, provide culturally responsive care, strengthen care continuity, and improve patient navigation—roles that closely align with CHW models of service.

Thursday Afternoon Plenaries and Workshops

Plenary 3: Can you Hear Me? Improving Outcomes between Professionals & Patients during Pregnancy & Birth/Impact of Implicit Bias - Through both discussion and video presentation, **LuAnne Brown, RN, BSN,MSN** Executive Director for Buffalo Prenatal-Perinatal Network (BPPN) will share their project which was developed through a partnership between BPPN and renowned playwright, Lisa Rafael. Using real stories from clients, doulas, midwives, physicians, etc. scripts were written to depict the stories. Black and Hispanic actresses were hired to present the stories which were videotaped in Buffalo NY at a local theater and then edited. Eleven videos of 2-4 minutes duration will be shown showcasing instances of implicit bias and followed by a talk back session to gauge audience feedback. [These videos recently received the highest Platinum Award at the Viddy competition.]

Thursday PM Concurrent workshops

Applications of Best Practices Outlined in the Hospital Doula-Friendliness Guidebook: A Closer Look at Support for Relationships between Hospital Staff and Doulas - Alison Whitney, MSW, MPH; Amaya Langaigne, MPH; Nicole JeanBaptiste, Doula; Ashanda Saint Jean, MD, FACOG. This session will be facilitated by two maternal health partners, including a doula and an OB/GYN, with support from NYC Health Department staff. The workshop will provide an overview of the various systems in place for doula-friendly hospitals. It will include interactive role-playing exercises to strengthen communication and respect across birth teams, where participants will apply strategies for successfully integrating doulas into the maternity care team with attention to the hospital and community partner linkage. Attendees will volunteer to play different roles (birthing person, partner, doula, OB/GYN, nurse) and act out case scenarios. Handouts will be provided to the audience with case scenarios and guided questions

included. Attendees will learn how to translate doula-friendly hospital policies into practice, identify and troubleshoot barriers and facilitators to successful collaboration between providers and doulas, and apply strategies for integrating doulas into the care team. This workshop will showcase different perspectives of those involved in the maternity care team, both at hospitals that have implemented the hospital doula-friendliness model, and at those that have not.

Group Care Across Contexts: Comparing Care in Rural and Urban Settings – Though this workshop, **Rhiannon Needham, MBA, CD, PHM-C** from Kaleida Health will examine the similarities and differences in delivering group prenatal care in rural and urban settings, with attention to access to care, community infrastructure, and population-level factors that influence participation and sustainability. Using an equity-informed, public health framework, the session explores how social and structural determinants of health, such as transportation, workforce capacity, resource availability, and community connectedness, shape the implementation of Centering Pregnancy in rural versus urban environments. Practice-based examples will illustrate how programs adapt to meet local needs while maintaining fidelity to the Centering model. Despite contextual differences, shared strengths emerge across settings, including peer support, patient empowerment, and relationship-centered care, all of which contribute to improved experiences and outcomes at both individual and community levels. Participants will gain practical insights into how group prenatal care can be leveraged as a scalable, community-centered public health strategy. Emphasis will be placed on identifying adaptable components, addressing common barriers, and considering policy and systems-level supports needed to sustain Centering Pregnancy programs across diverse geographic contexts in New York State and beyond.

Addressing Maternal Mental Health Challenges in NYS - Audrey Erazo-Trivino, PsyD; Yamilette Hernandez, BS; Dana Cohen, MPA, Isabella Hou, MPH; Staff from the NYS Office of Mental Health, will provide an overview of maternal mental health conditions as well as OMH's current program and policy developments, with an emphasis on the findings put forth by its Maternal Mental Health Workgroup and the recently released *Maternal Mental Health Recommendations Report*. Over the course of a year, this Workgroup convened to discuss the complex issues facing vulnerable and underrepresented birthing people in NYS and issued recommendations aimed at offering a framework that could effectively and pragmatically promote systemic reforms and address key issues. This presentation will share OMH's latest progress in implementing the report's recommendations, which encompass the following focus areas: Project TEACH, an increased focus on maternal mental health and substance use programming/infrastructure, the Collaborative Care Medicaid Program, dyadic care, workforce development, public awareness and education, community engagement, child welfare, screening, peer support, doulas, treatment and care coordination, data and quality improvement, and coverage and benefits.

Holding Ambivalence: Promoting Perinatal Mental Health Practice through Adoption-Informed Options Counseling - Kate Kaufman, LCSW-R, DSW & Patty Smith, BS from Friends in Adoption will explore adoption-informed options counseling through a perinatal mental health lens, emphasizing the emotional and psychological experiences of pregnant people who are considering adoption. Using various case scenarios and supporting research and drawing from clinical practice in perinatal and medical settings, they will briefly highlight common mental health themes such as anxiety, depressive symptoms, trauma responses, and anticipatory grief that arise during adoption-related decision-making. Attention will be given to the use of trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and adoption-informed communication strategies that promote perinatal mental health and well-being. Participants will engage in guided discussions to reflect on clinical dilemmas, language use, ethical tensions, and micro to macro barriers that shape how adoption is addressed in perinatal mental health practice. Through shared dialogue and case-based reflection, attendees will collaboratively brainstorm practical strategies for supporting pregnant people navigating ambivalence, reinforcing adoption-informed care as a core component of comprehensive perinatal mental health social work practice.

Vaccines During Pregnancy: Recommendations and Conversations - Ariela Zamcheck, DO, MPH, Bureau Director, Vaccine Confidence, Division of Vaccine Excellence, NYS Dept of Health will provide an update on immunization recommendations during pregnancy and share best sources of information for physicians and patients, current challenges to access, tools to address patient concerns about vaccinations and increase vaccine confidence in practices and healthcare facilities.

Social Care for Maternal and Perinatal Health - Recognizing social care and maternal and child health (MCH) are deeply intertwined, **Emily Engle, MBA**, Director of the Bureau of Social Care and Community Supports at the NYS Dept. of Health will share information about health related social need services provided under the Medicaid 1115 Waiver with a concentration focusing on improving health outcomes for mothers and children through access to quality care, education, and nutrition, especially for vulnerable populations.

Plenary 4: Preserving Maternity Services in Rural New York – Through this session **Sally Dreslin, MA, MS, RN**, Executive Director of Step Two Policy Project will provide background information on maternity services in rural areas of New York and examine rural-tailored strategies, including care delivery and payment models that have evolved in the state. She will examine a new delivery model set to be piloted in California that may serve as a roadmap for preserving maternity services and improving access to perinatal care in rural New York. She will also demonstrate a Tableau data visualization tool that shows the distribution of maternity and birthing services in New York by perinatal levels of care, across rural and not rural counties, and relative to critical access hospital sites, highlighting instance related access gaps relevant to a potential standby perinatal services pilot.

Closing Plenary: Human Milk & the Micro Biome - **Ashley Robinson, DrPH, IBCLC, CLE, CLD** will present findings from peer-reviewed observational and experimental studies examining microbial diversity in human milk and discuss maternal, infant, and environmental factors, including mode of birth, lactation stage, maternal health, antibiotic exposure, diet, milk handling practices, and feeding methods. She will reference studies using culture-independent sequencing techniques to characterize milk associated microbes.

Friday Plenaries and Workshops

Keynote: A Fresh Perspective on Intimate Violence. Understanding, Preventing, and Healing Using a Trauma-Informed “Multi-Human” Perspective – Through this session **Sally Dear Healey, PhD, PPNE, HFCE, TICP, CBA, CCE, Doula** will utilize a “multihuman perspective,” which emphasizes the interconnectedness of humanity and the concept of “becoming-with,” which suggests a “reciprocal process of connection, welcoming others’ ideals, voices, perspectives, and modes of experiencing the world” (Ducros, 2021). Not only will this create a sense of greater safety and acceptance for patients/clients, but it will also allow providers to better care for their clients/patients and themselves. She will focus on awareness, recognition and prevention strategies which are designed in such a way as to stop violence from occurring in the first place, or at the very least in its early stages of development. Attendees will experience firsthand why conversations that enable and include open and honest interchanges about things like IPV/IV, fear, shame, personal and professional needs, gender roles, money, power, sexuality, and especially how challenges and difficulties are/aren’t handled – individually and collectively - are exactly the conversations we need to have with ourselves, our patients/clients, as well as our supervisors and co-workers. She will share insights about how those conversations can be facilitated and wrap up with ideas of how everyone can ground themselves in the knowledge that greater violence and abuse awareness as well as emphasizing healthy and affirming open communication and compassionate support will benefit everyone involved and ultimately reduce the incidence of intimate violence in individuals, families, healthcare, and communities.

Friday Workshops

From Silos to Synergy: Understanding the Impact of SMM and Developing a comprehensive Obstetric and Neonatal Training Program in WNY - **Michelle Szeffler, BSN, RNC-OB, C-OB & Ashley LaBruno, BSN, RN** – [see description under Thursday am Workshops](#)

Prevention of Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders: Evidenced-based Models and Improving Access to Care – In this session **Elizabeth Werner, PhD** Associate Director of the Center for the Transition to Parenthood at Columbia University Medical Center will discuss the clinical and public health importance of accessible preventive interventions for PMADS and review several evidence-based counseling interventions that are effective in preventing PMADS. For each model, she will describe the clinical protocol, the theoretical approach, and provide the efficacy/effectiveness data available for each. She will present the Mothers and Babies (MB) program, a cognitive-behavioral preventive interventions, and Reach Out, Stay Strong, essentials for mothers of newborns (ROSE), an interpersonal psychotherapy preventive intervention. She will present Practical Resources for Effective Postpartum Parenting (PREPP), a parent-

infant dyadic intervention with psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioral, mindfulness-based, and psychoeducational elements she co-developed with Dr. Catherine Monk. She will share strategies for adding these types of preventive clinical services to existing mental health programs and models of clinical care. Attendees will be encouraged to think through and discuss ways that prevention strategies could improve the quality of care provided by their clinical practices. Attendees will learn about the importance of focusing on PMADs prevention (not just PMAD treatment) psychotherapy models proven to prevent PMADs, and specific clinical techniques and models that they can incorporate into existing clinical practice.

It is not a Badge of Honor to Survive; Transforming Healthcare “Pits” and Pitfalls into Transformative Possibilities for Providers and Patients, One Conversation at a Time - Sally Dear-Healey, PhD, PPNE, HFCE, TICP, CBA, CCE, Doula - Borrowing from research in the fields of psychology, neuroscience, neurobiology, human development, integrative medicine, mediation, and trauma studies, and taking a purely experiential approach, attendees will experience firsthand why and how conversations that enable and provide a safe space for open and honest exchanges about things like IPV/IV, fear, shame, personal and professional needs, gender roles, money, power, sexuality, and especially how challenges and difficulties are/aren't handled – individually and collectively - are exactly the conversations we need to be having with ourselves, our patients/clients, as well as our co-workers and supervisors if we expect change to happen and to facilitate the healing journey. A variety of supported activities and discussions will aid participants in learning not only why, but how these conversations can be facilitated and supported, learning hands-on tools and skills which will aid in recognizing and reducing the incidence of trauma and intimate violence in individuals, families, and co-workers in the healthcare setting, in our homes, and in our communities. As a familiar university ad suggests,[3] “sometimes it takes a different approach to see all the possibilities!”

Practical Approaches to Suicide Risk Assessment and Safety Planning in Perinatal Care - Nicole Tcholim, MD & Vanessa Tirone, PhD from Project Teach will facilitate this interactive workshop which is designed to provide practical, evidence-based approaches to suicide risk assessment and safety planning in the perinatal population. The session will combine brief didactic teaching with role-play. Faculty will review core principles of suicide risk assessment, including identification of warning signs, protective factors, and considerations for escalation of care. Evidence-based safety planning strategies and tools will also be reviewed. The latter portion of the workshop will center on case-based discussion and structured role-play, allowing participants to practice assessment language, safety planning, and response strategies. Evidence supports that structured screening, direct inquiry about suicidal thoughts, and use of collaborative safety planning improve identification of suicide risk and engagement in appropriate care (Stanley & Brown, 2012). The goal of this workshop is for participants to leave with increased confidence, standardized scripts, and practical tools that can be immediately applied in perinatal care settings.

Trauma-Informed Care in the Outpatient Setting After Pregnancy Loss – During this workshop **Heather Florescue, MD, FACOG**, Partner at University Gynecology and Childbirth Associates, University of Rochester will review examples of traumatic and positive experiences after stillbirth/pregnancy loss and ways to help provider trauma informed care after this experience. She notes while patients come to their OB/GYN for information, evaluation and comfort after a loss, they are often triggered more than supported at these visits. In this presentation she will explore various areas of care with stories from loss parents as the framework and simple ways to improve care for our patients and specific triggers that we can easily avoid and fix.

Reducing Severe PPH through Risk Identification and Targeted Actions – **Sharon Doyle-Hennessey, MSN, RNC-OB, C-EFM**, OB Patient Safety Coordinator and **Allison Frank, MSN, RNC-OB, C-EFM, L&D/NICU** Patient Care Director at NY Presbyterian, will share information on NYP's project to decrease the number of severe PPHs by identifying and treating high-risk patients in a timely manner. Through this workshop, they will review the TeamSTEPPS tools which enhance communication and improve patient outcomes. As TeamSTEPPS trainers, they will discuss their use for identification of High-Risk Patients using with a standardized tool and review prophylactic measures for high-risk patients, PPH Code Carts – medications, contents, checklists and appropriate codes, importance of Simulation and Drills, Huddles, Debriefs, Closed loop Communication, SBAR and CUS.

Plenaries:

Low-Barrier, High Impact: Integrating MATTERS Programming into Perinatal Practice to Address Fragmented Access to Substance use Services - Raven Manchester, ROC, and Brooke Langella, MPH (MATTERS Network) This session will offer attendees ways to explore how overdose prevention and harm reduction can be embedded across the perinatal care continuum for pregnant and postpartum individuals. The presenters will highlight the importance of understanding the unique challenges faced by birthing people and parenting individuals who use substances, as well as structural factors that shape risks. Treatment providers, healthcare teams, and community-based workers, such as doulas, are in a position to offer practical, empathetic, and culturally responsive interventions to these individuals through non-punitive harm reduction approaches. Participants will learn how to coordinate care for pregnant and postpartum individuals through MATTERS by integrating the program into existing workflows. MATTERS offers rapid connection to outpatient services, financial coverage for medication, transportation assistance, peer support connection, telehealth evaluations, and 90-day direct follow-up for individuals referred through the program. Additionally, MATTERS provides low-barrier, mail-based access to harm reduction supplies including drug testing strips, naloxone, and syringes for both individuals and organizations. The session will be delivered through an interactive lecture with opportunities to interact with MATTERS services in real-time to gain an understanding on how the program can address the needs of those seeking maternal mental health care and the organizations that serve pregnant people and families.

Closing Plenary: *The Role of Mental Health Consultation in Perinatal Care* - Vanessa Tirone, PhD, Perinatal Psychologist, Project TEACH, NYS Office of Mental Health and Nicole Tchalim, MD Fellowship Director for the CUIIMC Women's and Reproductive Mental Health (WARM) Program at Columbia University - This plenary will describe the services offered by Project TEACH, New York state's perinatal psychiatric access program, which provides perinatal mental health consultation and education. Project TEACH serves all New York state providers including medical (e.g., obstetrician-gynecologists, primary care physicians, midwives) and non-medical professionals (e.g., mental health therapists, community health workers, doulas, lactation specialists). We will present data from new patient calls (n = 492) to our consultation hotline between 2023 to 2024, describing summary data on callers' questions and advice given by our perinatal experts. Case examples will also be used to illustrate a typical course of consultation. Audience discussion will focus on how to integrate use of Project TEACH services into their practice. At the conclusion of this plenary, attendees will be able to identify clinical cases that would benefit from mental health consultation. Attendees will know how to prepare for and complete a consultation call.