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Examining health literacy and its association with maternal child health and nutrition outcomes: Results of a scoping review

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Ensuring optimal outcomes for women during pregnancy, childbirth and the postnatal period requires an understanding that multiple complex issues interact to influence a woman's capacity to use health information and services. Health literacy is recognized as an important determinant of public health. In fact, the WHO recommends promoting health literacy of parents in both developed and low resource countries as a global strategy to reduce the burdens of non communicable disease with origins in early development and attendant disparities. Simply providing information is ineffective to increase the capacity of mothers in poverty to maintain or enhance their health and that of their child. Our scoping review is the first step in a multi step research plan and addresses the following research question: What is known from the existing literature about how maternal health literacy is associated with maternal and child health outcomes throughout the prenatal, intrapartum and postnatal periods? The focus of this presentation will be on diet related health outcomes. This is one of several countries specific literature reviews currently underway; together, they will inform the design of a multi country study to gain a deeper understanding of the factors felt by women to empower them to obtain and use information and services for personal and child health. Ultimately, our goal is to identify one or more universal strategies to promote maternal health literacy among mothers in poverty and methods to adapt the strategies to local cultures and systems.

Biography

Elena T Carbone is a Health Education/Nutrition Communications Researcher. Her mixed methods work with communities integrates behavioral interventions to promote health and prevent complications related to obesity, diabetes and cancer. She is an Associate Professor/Graduate Program Director of Nutrition and Founding Director of the Community Engaged Research Program at UMass Amherst. She is a Registered Dietitian and an Editorial Board Member of two journals. She has made over 100 presentations nationally/internationally and authored over 30 peer reviewed publications. She has received multiple awards for her contributions to the field of nutrition, most recently from Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior.

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