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**UAMS-led Arkansas Perinatal Quality Collaborative Launches
with Support of 33 Hospitals, Takes Aim at Reducing C-Sections**

FAYETTEVILLE — Between 2018 and 2019, 23 women in Arkansas died from pregnancy-related causes. According to the state’s review panel of medical experts, 90% of these deaths were potentially preventable.

Now, 33 hospitals in Arkansas are working together to prevent maternal deaths through the Arkansas Perinatal Quality Collaborative (ARPQC), a joint collaborative between the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) and other medical institutions across the state. For the first joint initiative, hospitals will take steps to reduce cesarean deliveries for low-risk pregnancies.

“State perinatal quality collaboratives (PQCs) are leading the way toward improving the quality of maternity care and maternal health outcomes,” said William Greenfield, M.D., professor of Obstetrics & Gynecology at UAMS and medical director of the ARPQC. “With the launch of the ARPQC’s first initiative, Arkansas is joining the national effort to address the maternal health crisis.”

The ARPQC will equip health providers at participating hospitals with education and resources to promote high quality maternity care. The goal of ARPQC’s first initiative is to reduce primary cesarean birth rates, especially in low-risk pregnancies.

Arkansas ranks 14th in the nation in cesarean deliveries, according to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention. Cesarean deliveries — also referred to as C-sections — can increase a patient’s risk of infections, blood clots, and severe complications in future pregnancies.

“It is exciting to be adding another valuable stepping stone to improving maternal health in Arkansas,” said Pamela Brown, vice president of quality and patient safety for the Arkansas Hospital Association and a member of the ARPQC Steering

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Committee. “Arkansas has struggled with its rankings in several maternal health metrics for years, so this is a priority. Having the majority of our birthing hospitals participate in this collaborative is validation of their commitment toward improving maternal outcomes.”

The ARPQC will disseminate evidence-based maternal safety bundles to participating hospitals and will provide tools for implementing clinical guidelines. Providers at participating hospitals will engage in collaborative learning opportunities with the ARPQC, and hospitals will designate their own staff to lead quality improvement work at their facilities.

The ARPQC will work with hospitals over the next two years to reduce cesarean deliveries and will determine its next initiative based on provider input. As a part of its support to participating hospitals, the ARPQC will provide benchmarking data that helps facilities track their progress in meeting quality improvement goals and improving maternal outcomes.

“Quality improvement through POCs has greatly improved maternal health outcomes and reduced disparities in other states,” said Jennifer Callaghan-Koru, an associate professor with UAMS and the director of evaluation for the Arkansas Perinatal Quality Collaborative. “A priority of the ARPQC is to measure the impact of quality improvement work through the collaborative and to identify the next opportunities to better care for maternity patients in Arkansas. We’re excited to partner with local birthing hospitals to improve perinatal health outcomes in Arkansas.”

UAMS is the state's only health sciences university, with colleges of Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Health Professions and Public Health; a graduate school; a hospital; a main campus in Little Rock; a Northwest Arkansas regional campus in Fayetteville; a statewide network of regional campuses; and seven institutes: the Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute, Jackson T. Stephens Spine & Neurosciences Institute, Harvey & Bernice Jones Eye Institute, Psychiatric Research Institute, Donald W. Reynolds Institute on Aging, Translational Research Institute and Institute for Digital Health & Innovation. UAMS includes UAMS Health, a statewide health system that encompasses all of UAMS' clinical enterprise. UAMS is the only adult Level 1 trauma center in the state. UAMS has 3,240 students, 913 medical residents and fellows, and five dental residents. It is the state's largest public employer with more than 11,000 employees, including 1,200 physicians who provide care to patients at UAMS, its regional campuses, Arkansas Children's, the VA Medical Center and Baptist Health. Visit www.uams.edu or www.uamshealth.com. Find us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) or [Instagram](#).

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