# Black Babies Are Three Times Likelier to Die Than White Tots

When same-race doctors cared for Black infants, the children's mortality rate was halved.

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Despite the decline in infant mortality in the United States, Black babies are still dying at higher rates than their white counterparts. Now, new findings published in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America reveal that Black infants attended to by white doctors are three times more likely to die during their initial hospital stays, reports George Mason University (GMU).

For the study, researchers at GMU in Virginia examined 1.8 million hospital birth records in Florida from 1992 to 2015 and noted the race of the doctor providing care. While findings showed that this variable didn't make a difference in the likelihood of survival for white babies, scientists noted that Black newborns were at a significantly greater risk of dying in the hospital if their doctor was white.

"The disparity is quite striking, so the next question is why," said Brad Greenwood, PhD, an associate professor of information systems and operations management sciences at GMU who cowrote the findings. "There's a [multitude] of possible explanations, so the next step is to, through observations, find out the reasons for such a difference."

In addition, researchers observed that these inequities manifested more strongly in more complicated cases and when hospitals delivered more Black newborns. "The findings suggest that Black physicians outperform their white colleagues when caring for Black newborns," wrote study authors.

Greenwood said that as a way to close these gaps, more studies that scrutinize various medical facilities are needed. These inquiries would assess the role that structural racism plays in Black newborns experiencing different outcomes versus white infants.

"Babies are dying," Greenwood added. "That's not a political statement. That's what's happening, and it's unacceptable."

For related coverage, read "Minority Infants More Likely to Receive Poor Care in NICUs."

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