Maternal Deaths Are Rising Across the United States

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Here's good news for many new moms: Pregnancy-related deaths are declining worldwide. But for some women in the United States, maternal mortality is on the rise, according to a recent study published in the journal Obstetrics and Gynecology. Researchers say the closing of clinics, reduced access to female-focused health care and the defunding of Planned Parenthood locations in the United States could be to blame, CNN.com reports.

For the study, scientists reviewed findings about maternal mortality trends in several states announced in the "State of the World's Mothers 2015" study and the World Health Organization's "Trends in Maternal Mortality: 1990 to 2013" and reflected in new numbers from the National Center for Health Statistics. Researchers found that the United States currently performs worse than any other developed nation when it comes to new mothers' health. For example, an American woman now faces a one in 1,800 chance of dying because of a pregnancy during her reproductive years. Study authors found that in Texas those numbers were even worse.

In fact, recent reports show that pregnancy-related deaths in the Lone Star State more than doubled during the course of just two years. Advocates for reproductive rights pointed out that this is the same window of time when Texas legislators voted to defund Planned Parenthood, slashed dollars for family planning and drastically reduced access to abortions across the state.

Although the findings merely suggested a connection between these events, advocates noted the timing of the trends. "Women have been left out in the cold, without being able to obtain regular healthcare screenings, or birth control to space their pregnancies, and delays in their initial pregnancy test and prenatal referral—all of which are harmful to women's health," said Sarah Wheat, the chief external affairs officer for Planned Parenthood of Greater Texas.

Overall, in the United States, maternal mortality rose by 136 percent during the last 23 years, more than in any other country studied.

To learn more about how women's access to health care helps save lives, click here.

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