


CHECK PLEASE!

The Importance of The Pregnancy Check Box On Death Certificates in Identifying Pregnancy-Related Deaths

Jan M. Gorniak, DO, MHSA
Chief Medical Examiner
Fulton County Medical Examiner's Office
Atlanta, Georgia

TRENDS IN PREGNANCY-RELATED MORTALITY IN THE US 1987 - 2015



*Note: Number of pregnancy related deaths per 100,000 live births per year.

STATISTICS

○ According to the CDC, about 700 women die each year from complications of pregnancy or delivery

The USA has the highest maternal death rate among developed nations
Maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 2015.

United States	26.4
United Kingdom	9.2
Germany	9.0
France	7.8
Canada	7.3
Japan	5.4

DEFINIITIONS, DEFINITIONS, AND MORE DEFINITIONS!!!

Maternal mortality rate:
the number of maternal deaths in a given period per population of *women who are of reproductive age*

Numerator: Maternal deaths
Denominator: Women of reproductive age



MATERNAL DEATH

○The death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and site of the pregnancy, from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management, but not from accidental or incidental causes

PREGNANCY-RELATED DEATH

○The death of a woman while pregnant or within 1 year of the end of a pregnancy –regardless of the outcome, duration or site of the pregnancy—from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management, but not from accidental or incidental causes.

Accidental or incidental causes of death are not classified as maternal deaths.



DEATHS ASSOCIATED WITH PREGNANCY

○Deaths which occur during pregnancy, at the time of delivery, or within 1 year postpartum, regardless of the cause

PREGNANCY ASSOCIATED DEATH

○Deaths of women who were pregnant within the last year that are identified by death records, as well as other sources (obituaries, social media, news outlets, etc)

MATERNAL MORTALITY REVIEW COMMITTEE (MMRC)

○Multi-disciplinary groups that identify and review pregnancy-associated deaths, to identify which are causally related, and make recommendations for prevention of future deaths.

MORE DEFINITIONS!!!

PREGNANCY-RELATED

○Deaths related to or aggravated by pregnancy or its management

PREGNANCY-ASSOCIATED

○Deaths related to causes unrelated to pregnancy

PURPOSE OF THE DEATH CERTIFICATE

○Legal documentation that the named person is dead

○Information about the deceased

○Information that may be used to evaluate the cause, manner, and circumstances of death

○Information that may be used to settle the deceased's estate

○Information about disposition of the remains, such as where burial occurred

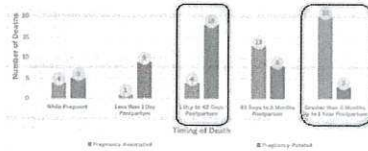
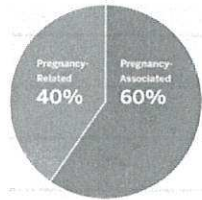
○Information that may be used by government, public health agencies, other state or federal agencies, or researchers to plan or fund programs designed to analyze, reduce, or prevent mortality

US STANDARD CERTIFICATE OF DEATH

36. IF FEMALE:

- Not pregnant within past year
- Pregnant at time of death
- Not pregnant, but pregnant within 42 days of death
- Not pregnant, but pregnant 43 days to 1 year before death
- Unknown if pregnant within the past year

GEORGIA MATERNAL MORTALITY REVIEW COMMITTEE



MATERNAL MORTALITY REFERENCE GUIDE

○Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) Maternal Mortality Workgroup is currently developing a reference guide for certifying deaths associated with pregnancy.

**MATERNAL
MORTALITY
REFERENCE
GUIDE**

PARTICIPANTS

- CDC Division of Reproductive Health
- West Virginia Office of Maternal Child and Family Health
- National Association of Public Health Statistics and Information Systems (NAPHSIS)
- Michigan Department of Health and Human Services
- Louisiana Office of Public Health
- Georgia Department of Public Health
- Ohio Department of Public Health
- Forensic Pathologists – Georgia, New York, Washington

TAKE HOME POINTS

- Pregnancy checkbox is important
- Medicolegal death investigators must ask about pregnancy status on all females of reproductive age
- Certifiers should be as clear, precise, and complete as possible



THANK YOU
