

BROADCAST-OSF OnCall plugs pregnancy and postpartum care gaps for Medicaid patients

Program enrolls nearly 1,000 patients in the first six months

OSF HealthCare says a 24-7 digital support program for pregnant women with Medicaid insurance is proving popular. Since it was launched in August, the pregnancy and postpartum support program has enrolled nearly 1,000 women. Currently, 500 women are enrolled in the initiative offered [OSF OnCall](#) as part of the [Medicaid Innovation Collaborative](#).

The program likely saved the life of a 25-year-old woman named Samantha. Eight days after she delivered a healthy baby girl, Samantha reached out to OnCall and was told to go directly to the Emergency Department. She had postpartum pre-eclampsia, which can lead to brain damage, stroke and death if left untreated. But, Samantha *was* treated and she's expected to make a full recovery. Samantha is Black and in the United States, Black women are three times more likely than white women to die as a result of pregnancy.

[A new report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) found 80% of maternal deaths between 2017 and 2019 were due to preventable causes, and many of the deaths occurred within the first year after giving birth. Kate Johnson, clinical supervisor for Digital Care at OSF, says pregnant women, particularly those with few resources, want additional support, and they're eager to have the 24/7 connection available through an app for a smart phone or tablet that's used for the program.

"It provides check-in questions, routine questions, like 'Are they having any signs of infection, UTI symptoms? Are they struggling with breastfeeding; having any depression symptoms?' And if they answer in any kind of an alarming way, that lets our nurses know right away ... sends them an alert, and we're able to contact those patients via telephone and triage if we need to." (:26)

Women with Medicaid insurance in parts of Illinois can self-enroll in the free program starting eight weeks into their pregnancy by going to intake.osfoncall.org. Once enrolled, women will receive a blood pressure cuff to take regular readings and they can request additional information and other equipment such as a breast pump.

Even if a woman was not enrolled in the pregnancy program, she can enroll in the postpartum support. Johnson says women will get new education messages each week throughout their pregnancy and postpartum.

"I think the education that we provide those moms during their pregnancy is awesome because it's getting them ready to deliver their baby. So, helping them think about things like how they want to feed their baby, birth plan, pain management for their delivery, things of that nature." (:16)

Mental Health support is available

The CDC study found mental health issues were among the preventable, pregnancy-related conditions that lead to higher mortality rates. Johnson says that's why the program offers depression screening at regular intervals before and after pregnancy.

"So, we will be screening her right upon enrollment into the postpartum loop. And then we'll do a two or three-week check-in to make sure emotions are doing okay. There is such a huge change in emotions postpartum with the changes in your hormones and bringing a baby home plus the sleep deprivation. So, we want to be there to support them in that initial six weeks before they see their provider." (:25)

One woman named Jane reached out to an OSF OnCall nurse several times after giving birth to her second child. By the third week, she reported having suicidal and homicidal thoughts and while an ambulance was dispatched, the woman calmly stayed on the phone with a triage nurse she trusted because of the ongoing relationship she had developed through the program.

The OSF OnCall Connect initiative also screens for social determinants of health – all those factors outside of a medical office, such as food insecurity, financial struggles, housing and transportation.

"I think what we're seeing mostly is patients who are struggling with transportation to get to their actual OB provider appointments, so we are able to align transportation for them in most cases. Just this past weekend, we had a patient that had no car but needed a prescription. So, we aligned her with a pharmacy that delivered those medications directly to her door." (:19)

Women in the program also have the option of being connected with a digitally-enabled community health worker who can help them navigate ongoing support from community-based organizations. Translation services are also available to make sure women get the medical care and social service support they need.

