

A stylized city skyline with various buildings in shades of blue and green, set against a background of light blue snowflakes. The letters 'LA REVE' are prominently displayed in large, bold, black font across the skyline.

LA REVE

The Official Student Newsletter for Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine
Department of Health Policy and Management. By Students, For Everyone!

END OF FALL SEMESTER

Louisiana's Maternal and Infant Health Crisis Calls for Comprehensive Reform

By: Holly Larson

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And More!

Maternal and infant mortality rates are critical indicators reflecting a society's well-being and the effectiveness of its healthcare system. Improving these outcomes is essential for upholding human rights, promoting equity, enhancing population health, preventing economic burdens, and ensuring the overall development and productivity of a society. Louisiana is currently facing a maternal and infant mortality crisis. A third of the state's parishes are "maternal health deserts", meaning they do not have an OBG-YN, and the state has the fifth highest maternal mortality rate in the country. This crisis also disproportionately affects the Black community, as Black mothers are four times more likely to die pregnancy-related deaths than their white counterparts. With the recent overturning of Roe v. Wade stripping abortion rights in Louisiana, the statistics are likely to worsen.

According to the 2023 March of Dimes Louisiana Report Card, the preterm birth rate in the state was 13.3%, compared to the national average of 10.4%. Orleans parish had a preterm birth rate of 13.5%. The report also found that the preterm birth rate among babies born to Black birthing people is 1.5x higher than the rate among all other babies. Smoking, hypertension, unhealthy weight, diabetes, previous preterm, and carrying multiples contributed to the likeliness of a preterm birth. The infant mortality rate is also concerning at 7.2 deaths per 1,000 births, compared to the national average of 5.4. Overall, Louisiana was given a preterm birth grade of F.

Louisiana has the highest percentage of births covered by Medicaid in the country, yet many providers do not accept Medicaid because of the state's low reimbursement rates. Little is being done to attract maternal healthcare professionals to the state, and there is a severe lack of specialized treatment for pregnant women who want to stop using drugs. There are also insufficient family support resources needed to reduce maternal and infant mortality rates. Many employers do not offer paid maternity leave, many jobs do not pay a living wage, and affordable child care is hard to find. The combined stress of these issues is reflected in the current pregnancy outcomes.

The state has taken modest steps to improve the crisis. On August 1st, 2023, House Bill 272 mandated private health insurance to reimburse doula services up to \$1,500, and Senate Bill 135 increased Medicaid reimbursement for midwives. Midwives can deliver low-risk pregnancies, and doulas provide support and act as patient advocates during pregnancy. House Bill 468 expanded postpartum Medicaid to allow mothers to stay on the health plan for up to a year after giving birth, rather than the previous 60 days.



Louisiana's maternal and infant mortality crisis demands urgent attention and comprehensive strategies to address the challenges it faces. While recent legislative measures signify a step in the right direction, more substantial efforts are required to change the deep-rooted issues contributing to this crisis. Addressing Medicaid reimbursement rates, attracting healthcare professionals, expanding specialized treatment options, and enhancing family support resources are crucial components of future policy. Sustained and collaborative efforts to create policy and a healthcare system that is equitable, accessible, and supportive of the population is essential for the future of Louisiana's maternal and infant health.

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Thriving Through the Holidays and Finals: A Student's Guide to Mental Wellness

By Holly Larson

As the end of the semester rapidly approaches, many students are experiencing increased levels of stress that can be daunting. Taking care of your mental well-being often falls last on the priority list when you are trying to balance your course load, social life, and work, especially as you prepare for finals and the holiday season. It is extremely important to pay attention to how you are taking care of yourself as we head into the last few weeks of the semester. The good news is that self-care can be fairly simple. Here are some tips to incorporate self-care into your daily routine.

1. Get enough sleep: Sleep is one of the most important factors in self-care and mental well-being, and oftentimes can be one of the hardest things to take care of when you are a student. Consistently getting 7-8 hours of sleep can do wonders for your energy and stress levels. Set a routine of what time you want to fall asleep and what time you want to wake up, and try to stick to it consistently. If you have trouble falling asleep, try turning off all technology at least 30 minutes before bed, and turning off overhead lights, keeping only lamplight on. Implement a calming routine before bed. This will help indicate to your brain that it is time to rest.

2. Get as much sunlight as possible: As the days become shorter, it is very common to experience some "winter blues". One way to combat this is to get as much time in the sunlight as you can throughout your day. Schedule outdoor exercise or walks in the middle of the day, when the sun is brightest, and work near a window when you can. Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is a more severe form of the winter blues. Talk to your doctor to discuss effective treatments for SAD, including light therapy, talk therapy, and medication.

3. Set boundaries: As students, our schedules often become packed during this time of year with school, social, and work obligations, and sometimes it feels like you have to say yes to everything. If you are feeling pressure to participate in activities that you want no part of, don't be afraid to politely decline. Accept your personal limitations of what you can handle, and make sure you are taking time to be alone and decompress when you can. Communicate your intentions to friends and family early so they know what to expect.

4. Have a plan: Combating decision fatigue can be a huge help when managing stress levels. When you are feeling overwhelmed, making a simple decision, such as what to watch on TV, can feel daunting. Have a plan for what you will do when you feel stressed. This can include calling a friend, listening to music, going for a walk, reading, watching a comforting TV show or movie, or practicing meditation. Think about what makes you feel at peace, and then you can have that activity to reach for whenever you need it.

5. Reach out for support: When you feel anxious and stressed, one of the best things to do for yourself is to reach out to someone that you feel safe with who you can talk to. Sometimes just talking through what you are stressed about will take some of the load off of your shoulders. If you need further support, reach out to the Tulane Counseling Center, which offers a variety of student support services available both online and in person.

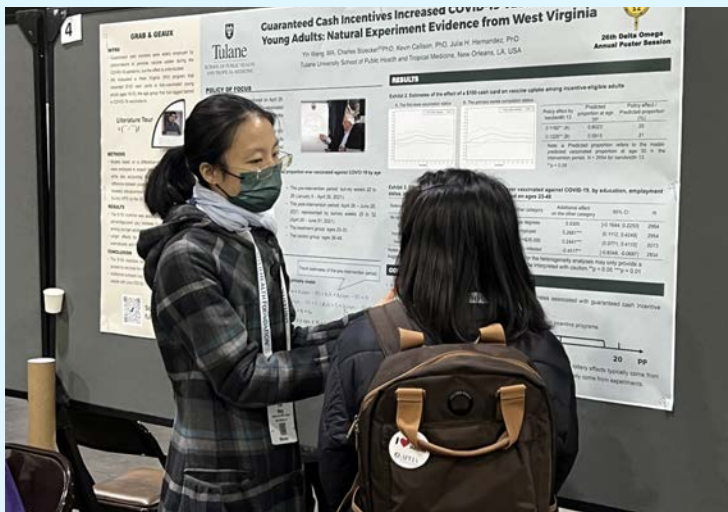
*These self-care tips are not a replacement for professional treatment. If you feel you or someone you know is in danger, call 911, a local mental health crisis hotline or one of the following national crisis resources for immediate assistance:

- Suicide Prevention Hotline: Dial 988
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-273-8255 (TALK)
- Crisis Text Line: Text "MHFA" to 741-741

YIN WANG WINS BEST POSTER OF THE YEAR AT APHA CONFERENCE

HPM PhD student Yin Wang won the Best Poster of the Year Award from the Delta Omega Honor Society (DO) at the APHA annual meeting this year. This is a national-award and exceptional accomplishment. Delta Omega Honor Society includes 131 competing chapters. Yin's poster initially won the prize at the SPHTM's DO Eta Chapter competition last spring and has now won the top award for the entire public health honor society.

Yin's poster was titled, "Guaranteed Cash Incentives Increased COVID-19 Vaccinations of Young Adults: Natural Experiment Evidence from West Virginia." HPM is excited to celebrate her accomplishment! Congratulations as well to her PhD mentor, Dr. Charles Stoecker, and other co-authors Dr. Kevin Callison and Dr. Julie Hernandez.



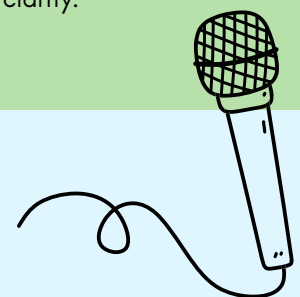
Yin commented:

"The award is indeed a surprise because we hadn't known there would be a competition! I guess I won the award mostly because I made a spinning wheel with four comic pictures of current literature and the novelty of our research. I carved a ¼ circle area from the poster and attached the wheel at the back with a handle in front (for people to rotate to see the pictures). People who stopped by all said they liked this device.

I'm glad to bring this honor back. You see, I used to work in other fields. Although I was passionate about doing public health research, I was repeatedly refused when applying for a PhD program in public health due to my lack of related experience. I applied three times [over three years] until I was finally sheltered by our school. You see, it was like drowning in the ocean for long and finally rescued by a ship... That's why I really appreciate the opportunity to study here.

Before the conference, I thought I should do something interesting and special as our school's name would be on the poster. This thought indeed helped me win the award, or I wouldn't have made that device as we had known nothing about the competition... In the future, I wish to dive deeper into methodologies in health policy research and enhance my holistic understanding of real-world issues. Thank you!"

Text has been lightly edited for clarity.



Celebrating Winter in New Orleans



Celebration of the Oaks:

Celebration of the Oaks at City Park is a must-do yearly New Orleans winter tradition. You can bike or drive through the park to admire two and a half miles illuminated with almost a million lights. Or, walk through the botanical gardens and enjoy the carousel amusement park. The holiday magic is open until December 30th, so be sure to make a stop by before heading home for the winter break. Tickets and more information can be found on the city park website.

Experience Live Theater:

Winter is the perfect time to explore the live shows and theater events in New Orleans. "Wicked" from Broadway in New Orleans will be at the Saenger Theater from November 29–December 17. You can also catch the "Nutcracker" ballet performed by the New Orleans Ballet Theatre at the Orpheum Theater with performances until December 23rd. Marigny Ballet Theater will also be performing their "Jazz Nutcracker" at the Opera House.



Ring in the New Year:

If you are spending New Year's Eve in New Orleans, there is a ton of great celebrations to take part of. The Allstate Sugar Bowl college football game will take place on New Year's Day at the Superdome, and the parade will be the day before on New Year's Eve at 3pm. Head to Jackson Square and the French Quarter to celebrate the holiday with the crowds. If crowds aren't your thing, many fantastic restaurants are open and will be offering specials.



Reading Recommendation of the Month

Your Local Epidemiologist Author: Dr. Katelyn Jetelina

By Helina Shiferaw

Are you looking for a valuable resource to stay informed on the constantly changing public health issues to inform your decisions? Your Local Epidemiologist is a newsletter published by Dr. Katelyn Jetelina, an epidemiologist and data scientist. She completed her post-graduate education at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston with a master's degree in Epidemiology and a PhD in Epidemiology with a minor in biostatistics. She currently works as a scientific consultant to several organizations, including the CDC.

She began publishing the newsletter in March 2020 amid the rapid developments of the COVID-19 pandemic with the intention of informing students, faculty, and staff. Now it has grown covering a wide range of topics like mental health, violence, reproductive health, public health emergencies, and other infectious diseases. Dr. Katelyn aims to inform and equip the public with data regarding public health science so that they can make evidence-based decisions by translating it into a form that is easy to understand for a wide range of audiences.

In her latest newsletter, she discusses the importance of taking precautions during the holiday season to minimize the risk of sickness, particularly in the midst of the flu, RSV, and COVID-19. She emphasizes the importance of immunity through vaccination, wearing masks, and improving ventilation to prevent illness. She provides information on at-home testing for COVID-19 with links to where they can be accessed with additional inputs on what to do if one is sick and shares her personal approach to reducing the risk of illness during the holidays by maximizing the probability of being healthy through precautions.



YLE Violence YLE Reproductive Health YLE Other Infectious Diseases YLE Public Health Emergencies Archive About

Fall 2023 Covid-19 vaccination coverage, U.S. vs. U.K.

Vaccine disparities are worse post-emergency
Oct. Data is starting to roll in on Covid-19...
NOV 28 • KATELYN JETELINA

Business plays a key role in trust

And thus, a big role in this respiratory season.
NOV 7 • KATELYN JETELINA

Wastewater switch

A change is brewing in the public health world about wastewater. And there's a lot of misinformation circulating. Here's what's going...
NOV 2 • KATELYN JETELINA

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Thank you to Our December Team

La Revue wants YOU! Email hpm@tulane.edu to learn more!

Please welcome Holly Larson as our next Editor-In-Chief of La Revue!



Holly Larson

Editor-in-Chief

Holly is a first-year Master of Health Administration student, and she graduated from Tulane for her bachelor's degree in 2023, with a double major in public health and economics. She is passionate about health equity, women and children's health, and community engagement. She hopes to be working in hospital operations in the future. Outside of class, she enjoys reading, going on walks in Audubon park, and trying new restaurants throughout the city.



Helina Shiferaw

Contributor

Helina is a first year MPH in Health Policy student and she graduated from Mekelle University, Ethiopia with a medical degree in 2020. She is passionate about maternal health, global health, health equity, and health systems strengthening programs. She hopes to make the best of her time at Tulane and in New Orleans. Outside of class, she enjoys hiking, reading, and exploring new places and cultures.



Daisy Ellis

Editor

Daisy is an MPH in Health Policy student. Some of her areas of interest include housing and homelessness, maternal health, and addiction. She moved to New Orleans 5 years ago to get her BSPH from Tulane, and has loved the city and the school ever since. She is graduating this month, and wants to thank the HPM department for an amazing two years. She will remain close by in her new position as a Chronic Disease Policy Senior Analyst at the New Orleans Health Department.

And, congratulations to GA's Kyra and Daisy on their Fall 2023 graduation! The department is excited to welcome Holly and Helina as the new faces of HPM.

Happy Holidays!