

## 'Windshield' tours promote understanding of the roots of infant mortality

June 20 2013, by Laurel Thomas Gnagey

---



(Medical Xpress)—An improvement in the African-American infant mortality rate in Genesee County, Mich., can be attributed in part to a program that opened the eyes of many in the community to the challenges faced by African-American mothers, according to research led by a faculty member in the University of Michigan School of Public Health.

African-American infant mortality declined to a historic level in 2005 and has remained lower, following a series of tours designed to increase understanding of obstacles for expectant mothers in some of the most impoverished areas of Flint, Mich.

The Genesee County Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) program's "windshield" tours exposed some 1,000 physicians, hospital administrators and staff, faculty members, medical center residents, community partners and residents to the conditions that have contributed to poor [maternal care](#).

"Local hospital staff members, especially [medical residents](#), are from all over the world. They work long hours and commute to work by freeway, so they do not experience the same community conditions as many of their patients," said Daniel Kruger, research assistant professor at the U-M School of Public Health.

Kruger and REACH partners conducted pre- and post-tour surveys to measure participants' understanding of the issues [mothers face](#) and the conditions within the community, and to measure any changes that resulted from their increased knowledge.

The results are featured in an article published in the Journal of Primary Prevention.

The tours took place in areas where [infant mortality](#) was the highest, and participants noted such disparities as the lack of grocery stores, the number of abandoned and dilapidated buildings, a number of unsafe areas, the absence of police facilities, and unreliable transportation options.

Other research from the REACH project has shown that a deteriorated built environment predicts adverse [birth outcomes](#), especially for

African Americans, independent of traditional socio-demographic factors.

"We encourage everyone to have a healthy diet, but that is not easy when all that is in the neighborhood is fast food restaurants and convenience food at liquor stores," Kruger said.

After hearing about such difficulties, transportation officials created a new bus stop at a full-service grocery store at the city's edge.

Upon learning the barriers faced by expectant mothers in some of the most impoverished areas of the community, many of the participants reported adjustments in their health care practices, and several led advocacy efforts to encourage more change.

Health care professionals became more understanding about appointment tardiness and less hasty about canceling, local stores began to stock more produce and fresh food options, tobacco advertising was reduced due to advocacy efforts, and buses were rerouted and schedules became more reliable.

Citation: 'Windshield' tours promote understanding of the roots of infant mortality (2013, June 20) retrieved 8 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-06-windshield-roots-infant-mortality.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--