



2018 NORTH CAROLINA WOMEN'S HEALTH REPORT CARD

A progress report on women's health & their health care needs

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UNC report provides snapshot of NC women's health

2018 North Carolina Women's Health Report Card finds both promising trends and room for improvement

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. (May 14, 2018) – A new report from the Center for Women's Health Research shares promising trends in the area of preventative measures, insurance access, and education for North Carolina's 5+ million women, while also demonstrating a need to address challenges in the areas of racial disparities, chronic diseases, and obesity rates.

The 2018 North Carolina Women's Health Report Card was released by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) center on May 14 and is the only report of its kind in the state.

The document is a progress report on the health and health care needs of North Carolina's women, who outnumber men. Preventive health, chronic disease (including cardiovascular disease, obesity, and diabetes), perinatal health, mental health, and substance abuse are the key measures examined.

Each edition is released biennially and tracks the state's female health statistics in two year increments. The 2018 publication is the tenth edition. CWHR utilizes the findings to identify and direct their research priorities.

"There are numerous conditions and diseases that affect women differently from men," said Dr. Wendy Brewster, Director of CWHR. "It is important that we target our resources wisely in these gap areas to preserve the health of our entire community.

Highlights of the 2018 North Carolina Women's Health Report Card include:

POSITIVE FINDINGS

Meeting Healthy People 2020 targets: NC women are exceeding Healthy People 2020 targets for colorectal cancer screenings and are close to matching targets for mammograms.

Improvements in insurance status: there is an overall improvement in insurance status, though the percentage of those with employer-sponsored insurance or Medicare/Medicaid has decreased.

ADVERSE FINDINGS

Racial disparities: disparities were noticeable in data reflecting health care access and screenings. On the whole, Caucasian women are more likely to be diagnosed with a

range of illnesses, such as chronic disease, cardiovascular disease, and depression. They are also more likely to report cancer, and less likely to die from cancer. This suggests a racial health disparity in doctor willingness to diagnose or a lack of doctor access. Although data is often unavailable, Hispanic and Asian women appear to have very low health screening rates.

Chronic disease: over a quarter of the state's women are living with one or more chronic diseases, which has a negative impact on the overall physical, mental, and financial well-being of women.

Rates of obesity remain high: More women in North Carolina are now classified as either overweight or obese than are within their recommended weight range. Obesity plays an important role in the risk factors for diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and stroke. These increased risks place a greater burden on the health care system and economy.

"The legislature has the difficult task of prioritizing issues that are important to the state and advising and leading the people of North Carolina through these challenging times," said Brewster. "The report card provides additional data that enables our leaders to make informed decisions."

The report card is distributed to medical and public health professionals, policy makers, researchers, and women's health advocacy groups throughout the state. Data was compiled from state health behavior surveys, vital statistics, and disease reporting systems by Dr. Rebecca Tippet at UNC's Carolina Demography, a division of the Carolina Population Center.

The mission of CWHR is to improve the health of women through research by focusing on diseases, disorders, and conditions that affect women only, women predominately, and/or women differently than men. Research efforts that require the most attention are identified through the collection and analysis of data for the report card. Current areas of research targeted by the Center include perinatal health, cancers affecting women, obesity, diabetes, women's cardiovascular health, women's mental health, and substance abuse.

A full copy the 2018 North Carolina Women's Health Report Card, as well as expanded data and health recommendations, may be downloaded at cwhr.unc.edu.