

Tompkins County Medical Director's Report
Board of Health
October 2012

Attended the Quality Assurance Committee Meeting on September 18th. This meeting covers the status of the Licensed Home Care Services Agency, MOMS and Maternal Child record audits, issues regarding delivery of care, lead poisoning cases that have arisen, incident reports, complaint reports in any of the Divisions of Community Health Services and a report also from WIC in terms of program issues or complaints, problems with delivery of care and current status.

Arising out of this meeting was the continuing issue of the difficulty delivering care to pregnant women (who for one reason or another) are not receiving care from either of the two obstetrical practices. Historically there were 3-4 obstetrical practices run by Obstetricians and Gynecologists and at least 3 obstetrical practices run by Family Physicians. Over the years this has evolved into one large OB/GYN practice and one single practitioner OB/GYN practice. Should a client, for whatever reason, not be able to receive services from these two practices, significant issues arise. Sometimes the direct medical care is delivered on an episodic basis by the Emergency Room or Urgent Care Centers. This is not adequate. Obstetrics is best delivered in a practice designed to deliver this care and care delivered otherwise is fragmented. Not only may certain services suffer, but education of the pregnant women as well.

The department will continue to advocate for systems in which this care may be more unified and to emphasize to practices the role that Tompkins County Health Department staff can play in "case managing" the client and the unborn child while facilitating the care the practice would like to deliver.

Cayuga Medical Center and local hospitals, as providers of obstetric services, also have a role to play in helping to resolve the problem as much as possible. In addition, our total health care system has a vested interest in the care of the unborn child. We want children born who are healthy and have optimal potential for a productive life. In situations in which socioeconomic reasons prevent appropriate access to care, society should take steps in order to meet this overall objective. Given that obstetrics is quite a different area of healthcare compared to care of other health conditions in adults and (to some extent) in children, special adjustments and allowances need to be made. We must advocate for the unborn child even in the face of situations in which individual maternal responsibility is proving inadequate. That is to say that the shortcomings of the pregnant women should not be allowed to compromise the health of the unborn children who do not have a voice of their own. In many developed countries extensive outreach to pregnant women and their unborn children goes above and beyond what is normally afforded to adults with chronic health conditions. We should do no less. Healthcare reform should provide for added outreach; practices and Tompkins County Health Department have the opportunity to collaborate more. Tompkins County Health Department will remind practices that we can do some of the outreach and case management for them. It's up to practices to reach out to us when they have a woman who would benefit.