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As frontline healthcare professionals who are on the faculty at the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing, we regularly witness the devastating effects of racism on maternal health. Research is making it clear that racism and discrimination are major contributing factors to the public health crisis in maternal health.

In a recent focus group conducted in Philadelphia looking at Black women's experiences with the health care system, one of the participants shared her story:

*"They made me sit in a waiting room for 20 minutes in pain... a regular waiting room with regular people that are waiting to be seen...And then the nurse is asking me questions, like I'm just a regular person trying to check in to the hospital to give birth. But I'm dying. I'm bleeding internally, and had to get a blood transfusion and an emergency C-section... I just thought I was in labor. And then I get in the back and they call for the surgeon to actually deliver my baby. She scanned my son, and she was like, "Unfortunately, your son doesn't have a heartbeat.""*

This devastating example illustrates several ways in which Black maternal health is negatively impacted by racism. Research has demonstrated that Black patients' experience of pain is more often discounted, that their care is more often delayed, and that they are provided lower quality care. In this example, as in too many others, the result is morbidity and death.

For these reasons, we join with others in recognizing Black Maternal Health Week as one important step in supporting efforts to reduce maternal morbidity and mortality among Black women.

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