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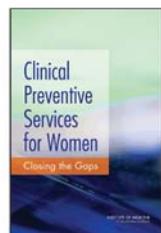
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Clinical Preventive Services for Women: Closing the Gaps (2011)

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Authors

Committee on Preventive Services for Women; Institute of Medicine

Description

Women suffer disproportionate rates of chronic disease and disability from some conditions, and often have high out-of-pocket health care costs. The passage of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 (ACA) provides the United States with an opportunity to reduce existing health disparities by providing an unprecedented level of population health care coverage. The expansion of coverage to millions of uninsured Americans and the new standards for coverage of preventive services that are included in the ACA can potentially improve the health and well-being of individuals across the United States. Women in particular stand to benefit

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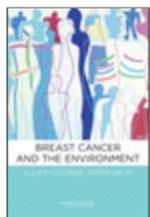
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the stage of HIV progression actually reduced their risk of transmitting the virus to their partners by 96 percent (NIAID, 2011).

Identified Gaps

The primary gap in preventive services not already addressed by the provisions set forth in the ACA (reviewed in this section) is that current screening recommendations by the USPSTF are limited in scope; that is, they are limited to pregnant women and high-risk adolescents and adults.

The evidence provided to support a recommendation for expanding screening is based on federal goals from the CDC, as well as clinical professional guidelines, such as those from the ACP, IDSA, AMA, and ACOG.

Recommendation 5.4: The committee recommends for consideration as a preventive service for women: counseling and screening for HIV infection on an annual basis for sexually active women.

PREVENTING UNINTENDED PREGNANCY AND PROMOTING HEALTHY BIRTH SPACING

Unintended pregnancy is defined as a pregnancy that is either unwanted or mistimed at the time of conception (Finer and Henshaw, 2006) and affects women with reproductive capacity, that is, from the time of menarche to menopause. Family planning services that are provided to prevent unintended pregnancies include contraception (i.e., all FDA-approved contraceptive drugs and devices, sterilization procedures) as well as patient education and counseling.

Prevalence/Burden

Unintended pregnancy is highly prevalent in the United States. In 2001, an estimated 49 percent of all pregnancies in the United States were unintended—defined as unwanted or mistimed at the time of conception—according to the National Survey of Family Growth (Finer and Henshaw, 2006). The unintended pregnancy rate is much lower in other developed countries (Trussell and Wynn, 2008). In 2001, 42 percent of U.S. unintended pregnancies ended in abortion (Finer and Henshaw, 2006). Although 1 in 20 American women has an unintended pregnancy each year, unintended pregnancy is more likely among women who are aged 18 to 24 years and unmarried, who have a low income, who are not high school graduates, and who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group (Finer and Henshaw, 2006).

The consequences of an unintended pregnancy for the mother and the baby have been documented, although for some outcomes, research is limited. Because women experiencing an unintended pregnancy may not immediately be aware that they are pregnant; their entry into prenatal care may be delayed, they may not be motivated to discontinue behaviors that present risks for the developing fetus; and they may experience depression, anxiety, or other conditions. According to the IOM Committee on Unintended Pregnancy, women with unintended pregnancies are more likely than those with intended pregnancies to receive later or no prenatal care, to smoke and consume alcohol during pregnancy, to be depressed during pregnancy, and to experience domestic violence during pregnancy (IOM, 1995).

A more recent literature review found that U.S. children born as the result of unintended pregnancies are less likely to be breastfed or are breastfed for a shorter duration than children born as the result of intended pregnancies and that mothers who have experienced any unwanted birth report higher levels of depression and lower levels of happiness (Gipson et al., 2008). Finally, a recent systematic literature review found significantly increased odds of preterm birth and low birth weight among unintended pregnancies ending in live births compared with pregnancies that were intended (Shah et al., 2008).

The risk factors for unintended pregnancy are female gender and reproductive capacity. Although certain subgroups of women are at greater risk for unintended pregnancy than others (e.g., women aged 18 to 24 years, unmarried women, women with low incomes, women who are not high school graduates, and women who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group), all sexually active women with reproductive capacity are at risk for unintended pregnancy. In 2008, approximately 36 million U.S. women of reproductive age (usually defined as ages 15 to 44 years) were estimated to be in need of family planning services because they were sexually active, able to get pregnant, and not trying to get pregnant (Frost et al., 2010). More than 99 percent of U.S. women aged 15 to 44 years who have ever had sexual intercourse with a male have used at least one contraceptive method (Mosher and Jones, 2010).

Pregnancy spacing is important because of the increased risk of adverse pregnancy outcomes for pregnancies that are too closely spaced (within 18 months of a prior pregnancy). Short interpregnancy intervals in particular have been associated with low birth weight, prematurity, and small for gestational age births (Conde-Agudelo et al., 2006; Fuentes-Afflick and Hessol, 2000; Zhu, 2005). In addition, women with certain chronic medical conditions (e.g., diabetes and obesity) may need to postpone pregnancy until appropriate weight loss or glycemic control has been achieved (ADA, 2004; Johnson et al., 2006). Finally, pregnancy may be contraindicated for women with serious medical conditions such as pulmonary hyper-