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Health Inequalities in Maternal & Child Health: Effects of COVID-19 Hospital Policies on Marginalized Populations

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Title: Health Inequalities in Maternal & Child Health: Effects of COVID-19 Hospital Policies on Marginalized Populations

Amid rapidly evolving scientific data, were hospitals employing evidenced-based policymaking during the COVID-19 pandemic? This research takes up calls to examine maternity wards where emerging research highlights the negative mental health impacts of policies such as "Birthing Alone" during the pandemic (Friesen et al., 2021). Cumulative Inequality Theory suggests that these impacts may have negative health consequences on later life outcomes for mothers and infants. This study employs a three-pronged approach: a content analysis of hospital policies within maternity wards in Ontario; a quantitative analysis examining odds of maternal and infant morbidity and mortality depending on race and socioeconomic background; and a qualitative review of maternal agency/privilege by interviewing mothers that selected home births over hospital births during the pandemic. Much like previous pandemics, COVID-19 has exacerbated social inequalities (Mamelund & Dimka, 2021), thus making it imperative that we examine mechanisms to alleviate negative health impacts on vulnerable populations.