

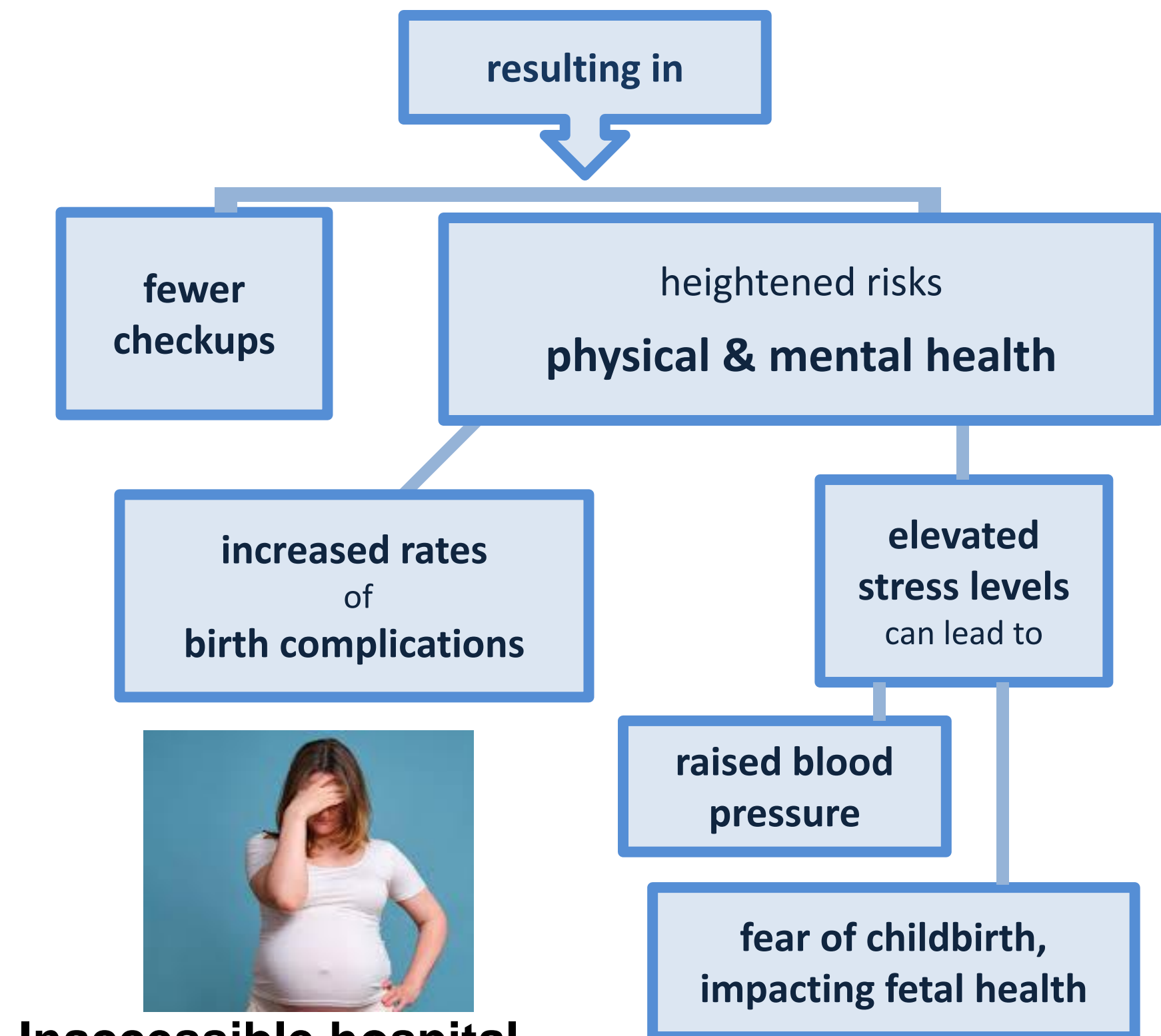
# CARE MODEL TO MINIMIZE TRAUMA FOR PERINATAL INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Daniela Pinto Carerra, B.A; Vanessa Ulibas, M.S., APCC



## BACKGROUND

Pregnant individuals with disabilities often face inadequate prenatal care leading to stress and trauma.



Inaccessible hospital worsen stress & anxiety during pregnancy, contributing to higher rates of Perinatal Mood or Anxiety Disorder (PMD).



Research gaps impede effective healthcare interventions, with studies indicating a rise in antenatal and postnatal depression, emphasizing their heightened vulnerability during the postpartum period.

(Brown et al., 2022; Booth et al., 2021; Nishat et al., 2022; Morris et al., 2021)

## CONTENT / ACTION

Despite the ADA ensuring equal opportunities, healthcare requires changes to improve equitable access. Studies reveal that prenatal individuals with disabilities often experience unequal treatment and care compared to others.

### STEPS FOR IMPROVEMENT

<b>TRAINING</b> Train staff & promote <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respectful language</li> <li>Active listening</li> <li>Diverse communication strategies</li> </ul>	<b>PERSONALIZED CARE</b> Develop individualized plans longer appointments & accommodations improve safety, reduce stress, & encourage regular checkups	<b>EQUIPMENT SUGGESTIONS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large accessible birthing suite gives enough space to transfer patients to the bed</li> <li>Adjustable examination beds</li> <li>Wheelchair scales</li> <li>Stepping stools</li> <li>Hoyer lift</li> </ul>
<b>ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION</b> Offer resources in varied formats	<b>FEEDBACK</b> Establish channels for input and improvement	

(Blair et al., 2022; Morris et al., 2021; Redshaw et al., 2013)

### ASK THE PATIENT

Acknowledging that healthcare providers in rural, remote, and community settings may encounter difficulties and lack resources to accommodate every disability.

People with disabilities know a lot about their health condition and are adept at determining what strategies will be effective for them.

Involve the patient in decision-making to build trust, ensure safety, and reduce injuries for patients and health employees. Learn about disabilities and their impact on pregnancy.

“... getting the patient on the exam table. They don't know how to do that, don't have the right equipment to make it easy.”

Prenatal individuals with disabilities experience minor risks, with a higher percentage of prenatal and postpartum health complications than those without disabilities.

Often, the expecting parents are aware of the complications of their health and the possibility of it affecting fetal development.

The lack of proper equipment during ultrasounds and checkups often makes the expecting parents worry, stress, and develop anxiety about the quality of services they may experience during their pregnancy.

Due to the lack of accessible weighing scales, many individuals with disabilities don't get weighed during their check-up compared to other people who are pregnant



Consult your doctor before doing any exercises

### DE STRESS WITH SOMATIC THERAPY

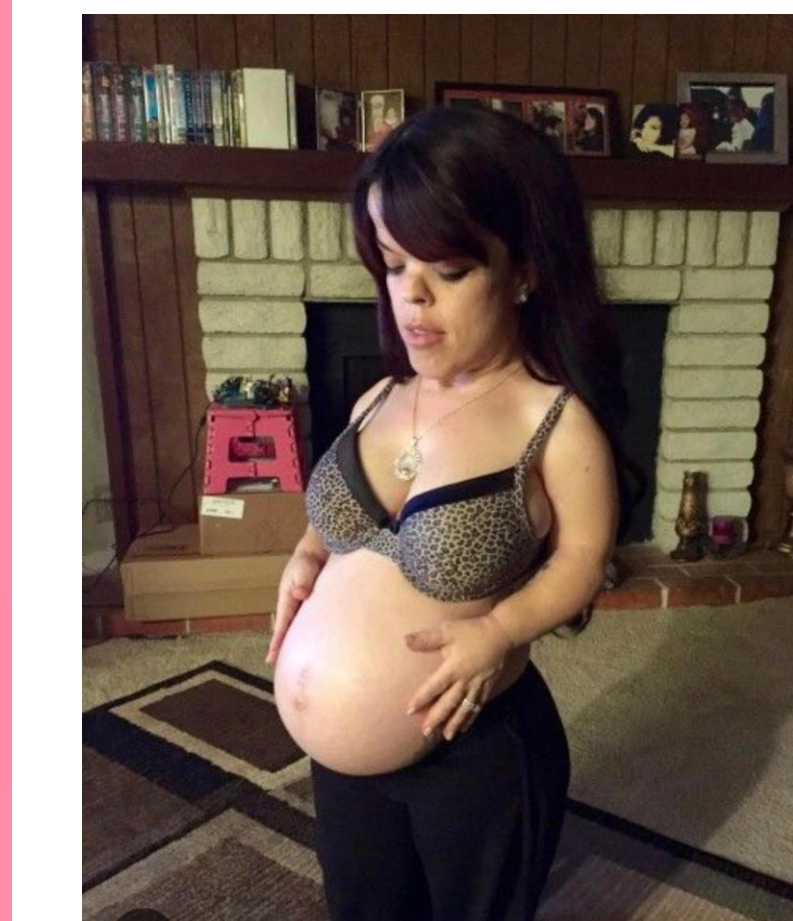
Stressors that accompany pregnancy impact all parents. There is proven research about Somatic Therapy having positive outcomes for expecting parents.

One of the beautiful aspects of pregnancy is the opportunity to bond and develop positive feelings by engaging all our senses in the experience.

Maternal odor aids nursing, soothes crying infants, and reduces pain during lactation. Encouraging deep breaths and enforcing feelings of safety reduces anxiety and fosters secure attachments.

Somatic Therapy exercises focus on the body's sensations to help the release of suppressed anxiety, stress, or trauma. Exercises are easy to modify.

## LESSONS LEARNED



Somatic therapy tailored to prenatal individuals with disabilities improves maternal and fetal well-being by addressing PTSD, depression, and anxiety.

It aids in reducing anxiety, enhancing parental bonding, and increasing positive interaction.

This intervention also provides trauma support, addressing emotional, physical, and psychological needs during pregnancy.

Adapting healthcare interventions, collaborating with mental healthcare partners, and aligning trauma-informed care can create a positive birthing environment, reducing complications and long-term health risks for both parents & child.



(Bigelow et al., 2010; Bigelow et al., 2012; Emerson, 2015; Jessen, 2020; Nishat et al., 2022; Marx, 2017; Spence, 2021; CS-CSHB 937 Perinatal Mental Health, 2018)

## CONCLUSION

Using inclusive language and accommodating diverse abilities with proper equipment will minimize negative healthcare experiences. Longer appointments and these adjustments enhance safety, reduce anxiety, and encourage regular checkups, reducing pregnancy complications.

Promoting sensory-based parenting for healthy, cost-effective, and beneficial attachments for parents and children. This will improve bonding and reduce risks for mental and physical health issues in both childhood and adulthood.

## Disabilities are a spectrum with different Health difficulties and needs

### TIPS TO MINIMIZE NEGATIVE HEALTHCARE EXPERIENCES FOR PROVIDERS

#### UNDERSTANDING THE VARIABLES THIS COMMUNITY FACES

- Higher rates of
  - Food insecurities
  - Unstable housing
  - Trauma/Abuse (discriminatory, domestic, financial, physical, psychological, sexual)
  - Multiple disabilities
  - Teratogenic associated medications
  - Substance abuse

#### COMMUNICATION

- Communicate courteously, respectfully, & professionally as you would with anyone else. This leads to better understanding and improved healthcare outcomes
- Communicate directly with the patient, not their support person.
- Use simple language if needed, but NEVER assume understanding.
- Be patient & comprehensive when asked to repeat information.

#### OFFER ASSISTANCE & ACCOMMODATIONS TO LIGHT, TEMPERATURE, SOUND & CHEMICAL SENSITIVITIES

- It's important to offer assistance to those who may not request accommodations. This is particularly important for individuals who may be unable to ask for help due to illness or discomfort, ensuring their inclusion and safety.
- Provide quiet rooms to ensure privacy for interpreters and reduce sensory overload and anxiety.
- Adjust lighting for people with seizure disorders and vision impairments.
- Use non-allergenic cleaning solutions. Avoid using air sprays, which may cause harm to individuals with respiratory problems.

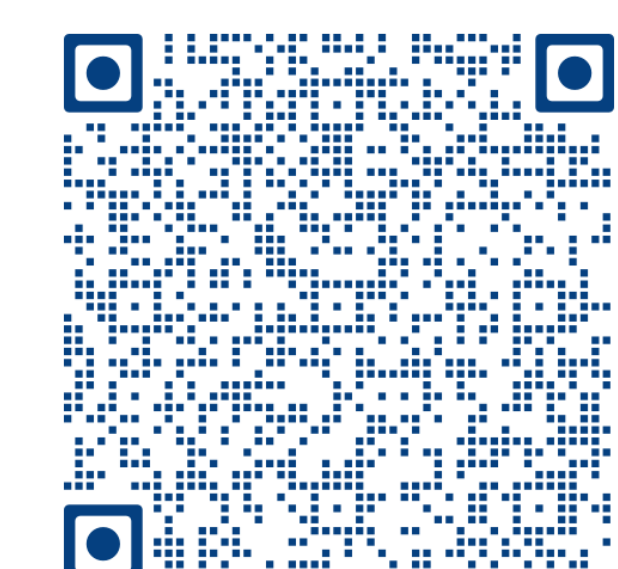
#### REMEMBER THAT

- Disability is NOT an illness & should not be treated as one.
- Avoid assumptions of needs & abilities
- Stay calm and maintain professionalism in challenging situations.
- This will ensure the patient's safety and minimize any stress or anxiety they may be experiencing.

## INFORMATION

**RESEARCH LEADER & PRESENTER**  
Daniela Pinto Carerra

**CO-PRESENTER & RESEARCHER**  
Vanessa Ulibas



## CONTACT INFORMATION

Daniela Pinto Carerra  
dpintocarerra@gmail.com

Vanessa Ulibas  
Eagle Rock Therapy  
vanessaulibas@gmail.com