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The Magnolia Project: An outcome evaluation of the impact of pre and interconceptional care case management on high risk women to improve birth outcomes.

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A growing body of literature points to the need to improve the health of high risk women prior to conception to improve birth outcomes. The Magnolia Project, located in Jacksonville, Florida, is a program designed to improve and maintain the health of women throughout their child-bearing years. The primary approach the program is a case management approach that links social and behavioral counseling, education and support to culturally sensitive and community based clinical services for high risk women before they become pregnant (again). A methodological research design was developed to assess the impact of pre and interconceptional care case management on high risk women of the Magnolia Project including a matched comparison group from a similar area and a logic model that linked the intervention to distal outcomes through intermediate outcomes. The different levels of outcome and process required very different designs, and data collection and analysis procedures. The results from the study are promising with statistically significant reductions in low-birth-weight births and STDs among the participating women. Highly meaningful reductions in infant mortality (over 40/1000) were observed, but these reductions were not statistically significant due to the small number of live births. The results provide important insights for both program development and evaluation research design. Recommendations from preliminary findings suggest expansion of the program within project area, processes that ensure fidelity to the intervention, and an external comparison group outside the target area to reduce cross contamination and to strengthen comparative assessment.