



Improving Continuity Care For Pregnant And Neonatal Native American Patients In Jefferson County Through New Residency Initiative

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Background

It has been well over a decade since the Indian Health Service (IHS) in Warm Springs, Oregon has had an obstetric continuity provider for prenatal, labor and delivery, and postpartum care for pregnant patients and neonates. Without a labor and delivery facility in Warm Springs, antepartum patients are directed to St. Charles Medical Center. Preferring to remain nearby, they predominantly opt to deliver in Madras Oregon at the St. Charles Family Birthing Center (FBC). Although they are encouraged to establish with a local provider at St. Charles Family Care, Mosaic Community Health, or Madras Medical Group prior to labor, a plethora of barriers exist. These include scheduling limitations, travel resources, health literacy, and generational medical trauma^{1,2,3}, to name a few. Ultimately, the majority of IHS patients present to the FBC without having met their delivering physician. For the first time, the inaugural OHSU Rural Track Program (RTP) residency is filling this gap. Residents are now seeing antenatal patients at IHS throughout their pregnancy, delivering their babies in Madras, and providing postpartum and newborn care at the Warm Springs IHS clinic.

Objective

Since the initial proposal for a new residency program in Central Oregon, leadership in both Madras and Warm Springs have been collaborating to improve care and community relations with Native American patients. This obstetrics continuity care initiative is aiming to accomplish just that. In addition, residents will be afforded the opportunity to substantially increase their continuity delivery metrics and pediatric encounters.

Methods

1. Educating IHS patients about new continuity providers
 - Prenatal, postpartum, and neonatal visits are now preferentially scheduled on Fridays
 - Residents have dedicated scheduled time for these Friday clinics
 - Supervision provided by Drs. Santiago and Fields, who currently provide all prenatal care in Warm Springs.
2. Creating new protocols for FBC nursing and on-call physicians to ensure IHS patients have a continuity provider present for their labor and delivery course
 - Nursing staff contacts the resident physician on-call for all IHS laboring patients
 - On-call attendings provide supervision for residents during these deliveries
3. Initiating a specific IHS delivery tracking system
 - Prenatal records are provided to resident physicians who maintain a real-time log of all IHS deliveries in Madras. Up to this point, these data have not been collected or tracked.
4. Scheduling round the clock resident availability to improve continuity
 - With the new cohort's arrival in Madras this August, resident's will have a self-managed IHS continuity on-call schedule

References

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2. *The Generational Impact of Racism on Health: Voices From American Indian Communities.* Health Affairs. 2022. Solomon TGA, Starks RRB, Attkai A, et al.
3. *Intergenerational Transmission of Ethnoracial Historical Trauma in the United States.* Annual Review of Clinical Psychology. 2024. Nagata DK, Kim JH, Gone JP.

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Results

St. Charles Madras FBC has approximately 150 deliveries annually, with approximately 25 of those being IHS mothers.

100% of the 25 currently pregnant IHS patients have been seen by a resident physician for prenatal care.

Of the 18 IHS deliveries in Madras since August 2026 (when the 2027 cohort arrived), 10 have been delivered by a resident physician.

Of these 18 neonates, 13 of them have been seen by a resident physician at IHS for a well child visit within their first 6 months of life.

Of the 19 total resident continuity deliveries, 10 have been IHS patients.

Discussion

Improving continuity care for pregnant and neonatal Native American patients in Jefferson County is both a community initiative and invaluable resident physician education opportunity. Developing these relationships with the local indigenous community accomplishes measurably enhanced health care access for this underserved population. Additionally, resident physicians gain increased exposure to experiential learning.

The IHS continuity care initiative is still in its early phases, with less than half of the total number of residents currently located in Madras, Oregon. A full cohort of 6 residents will be onsite by August, 2027.

The RTP's goal is to have 100% of all IHS laboring patients at St. Charles Madras FBC be managed and delivered by a resident continuity provider. This goal is expected to be achievable once the full cohort is present in Central Oregon next year.