

# Even One is Too Many: Reducing Disparities in Infant Mortality Among Ghanaian Women

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## Ghanaian Population & Infant Mortality Rates

- Over the last 10 years the Worcester infant mortality rate (IMR) has averaged 7.8 deaths per 1000 live births while the MA state average IMR has been 4.8 and US average IMR has been 6.7 (Worcester Healthy Baby Collaborative, 2013, p. 4)
- Only 7% of Worcester residents identify themselves as Black yet between 17% and 55% of the infants who died in Worcester over the past 10 years were born to Black mothers, with the majority being born to immigrants from Ghana (Worcester Healthy Baby Collaborative, 2013, p. 6)

Figure 1: (Worcester Healthy Baby Collaborative, 2013, p. 4)

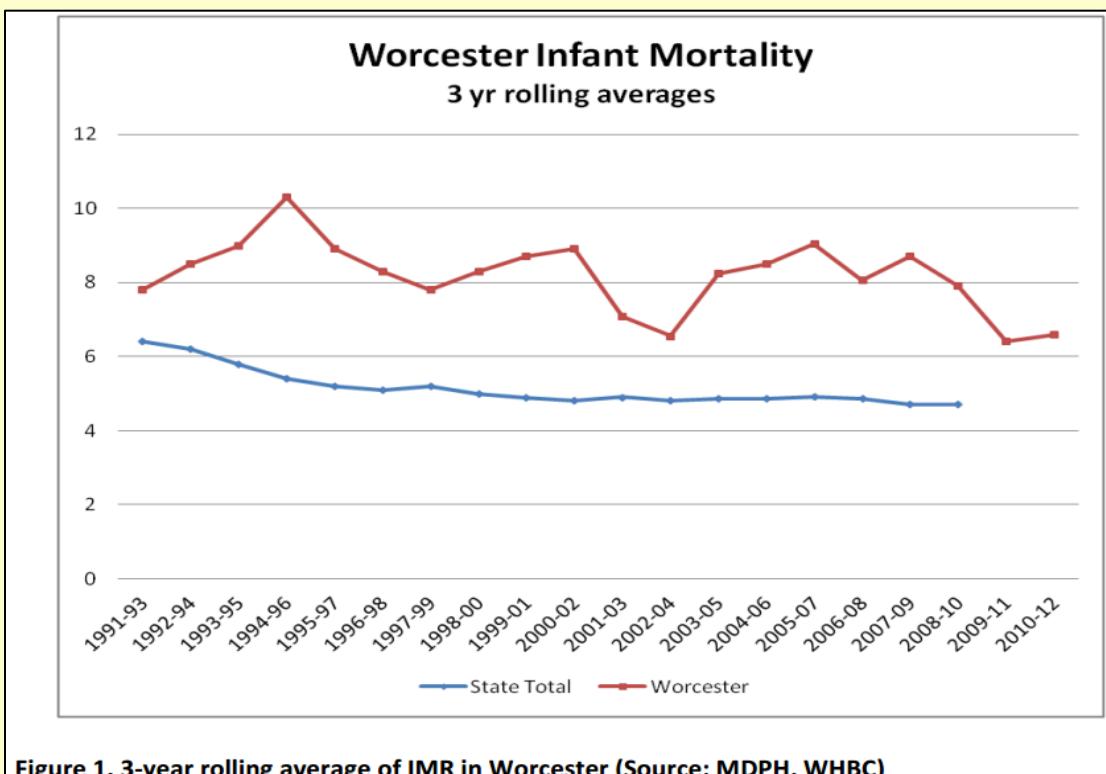
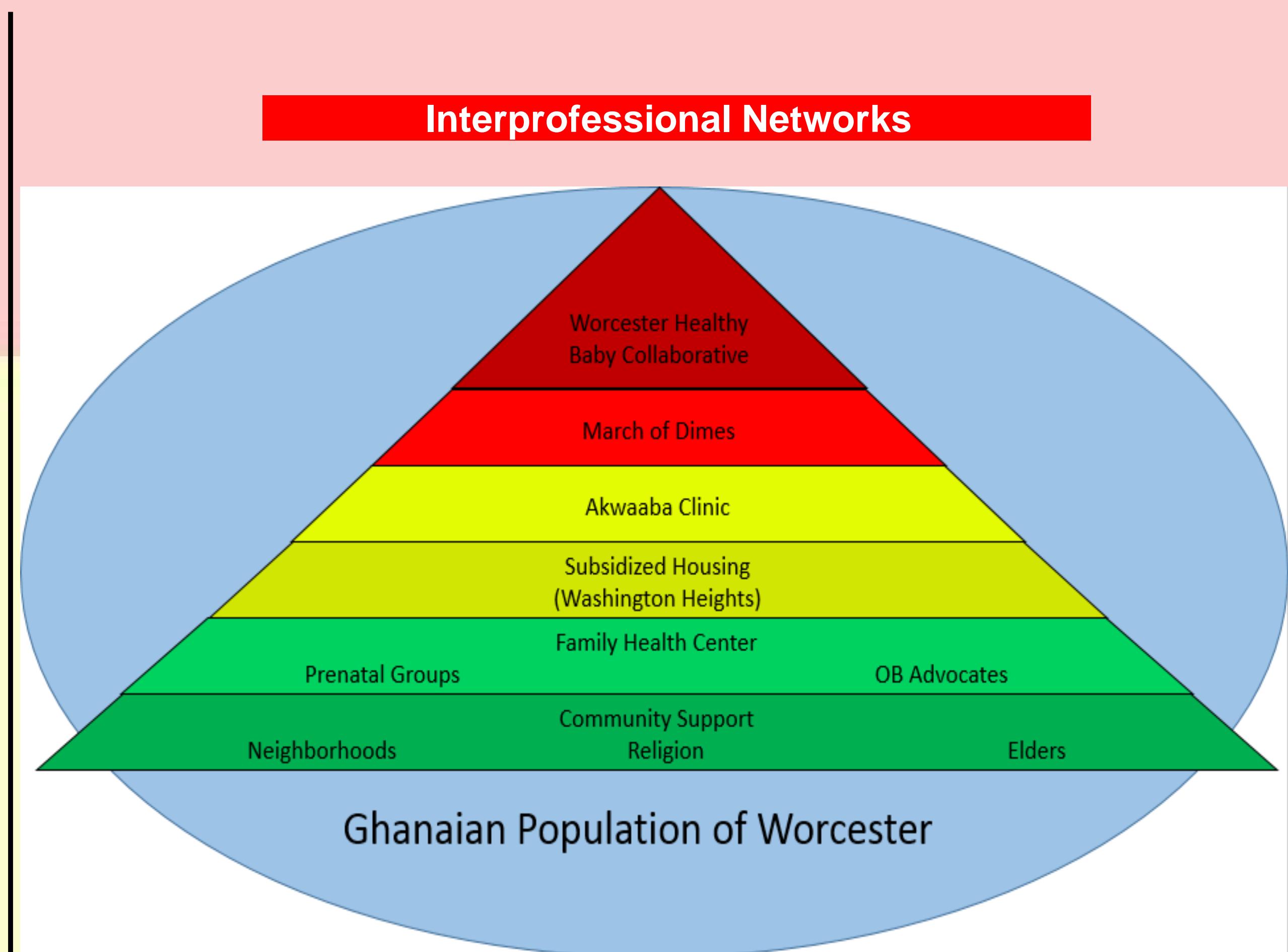
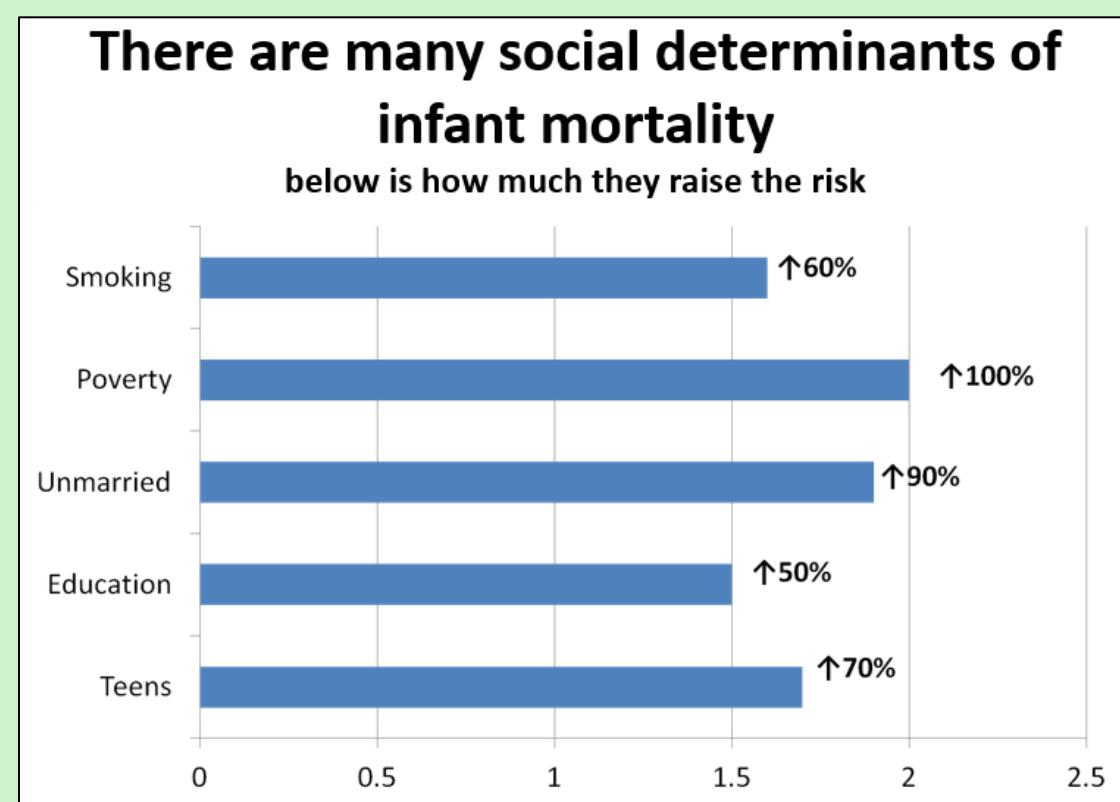


Figure 1. 3-year rolling average of IMR in Worcester. (Source: MDPH, WHBC)

- The most significant social determinants that raise the risk of infant mortality in any population are poverty, single marital status, teen pregnancy, smoking and lower level of education (Magee, 2014, slide 9)
- The absence of these known risk factors in the Ghanaian population is contradictory to the observed IMR and therefore many Ghanaians are categorized as high risk patients during pregnancy based solely on their ethnic heritage (Theroux, Toft Klar, & Messenger, 2013, p. 652)

Figure 2: (Magee, 2014, slide 9)



## Analysis of Interprofessional Networks

- Strengths
  - There are many elements of support for the Ghanaian community in Worcester
  - Nhyira Ba (part of Worcester Health Baby Collaborative) is a culmination of all these aspects of society working toward a common goal of reducing infant mortality among the Worcester Ghanaian population
- Weaknesses
  - These groups are not always working together and a more collaborative system would allow for greater feedback from the community members
  - March of Dimes Infant Mortality Summit brought together many of the leaders from advocacy groups in Massachusetts to discuss ongoing efforts to address key factors influencing infant mortality within these communities, but there were no community members in attendance

## Our Service Project: Stress Relief Workshop

- On November 1st A Perceived Stress Scale was administered to five workshop participants at the Bethsaida Christian Center Church in Worcester, MA
- The Benefits of Exercise and Stress Reduction were shared
- Led participants in a 5 minute guided imagery meditation as another means of incorporating time for the self in everyday life to help with stress alleviation
- Active Discussion with five female group participants about critical stresses in their lives and other health concerns

## Lessons Learned

- Infant mortality is a measure of a community's health, its support networks, and its ability to benefit its members
- An understanding of religious, nutritional, economical and cultural components sheds light on transfer of care from Ghana to the United States and its effect on migrant health

## Key Takeaway Points

- To improve outcomes, education needs to take place at the community level, with an emphasis on stress management in this particular population
- Concerted efforts among local, state and national organizations need to align goals in order to adequately address the causes for disparities in infant mortality among the Ghanaian community

## Next Steps

- Community members must be afforded the opportunity to engage with advocacy groups to offer realistic solutions for improving healthy baby outcomes.
- Current advocacy efforts focusing on preconceptual education and preterm birth reduction offer opportunity for state and local collaboration, with the inclusion of community members.

## References

- Magee, D. B. (2014). Infant Mortality: A Vital Sign of Community Health, slides 1-24 [PowerPoint Presentation]
- Theroux, R., Toft Klar, R., & Messenger, L. (2013). Working Hard: Women's Self-Care Practices in Ghana. *Health Care for Women International*, 34, 651-673.
- Worcester Healthy Baby Collaborative (2013). 2014 City Council Report: 2013 Report on Infant Mortality in the City of Worcester. Retrieved from <http://www.worcesterhealthybaby.org>

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