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High Blood Pressure During Pregnancy May Be a Warning Sign of Life-Threatening Condition

— *World's Leading Clinicians and Researchers to Discuss Best Practices for Predicting, Preventing, and Managing Preeclampsia During Annual Pregnancy Meeting* —

Washington, DC — Each year, thousands of women and their babies die or get very sick from preeclampsia, a serious and potentially life-threatening condition that occurs during pregnancy and occasionally during the first few weeks following childbirth. High blood pressure during pregnancy is one of the warning signs.

If left untreated, preeclampsia can lead to seizure, stroke, organ failure, and even the death of the woman and/or her baby. Preeclampsia can also have implications long after pregnancy, including on a woman's cardiovascular health.

On Jan. 25-26, the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine (SMFM) and the Preeclampsia Foundation will bring together leading national and international clinicians and researchers for an in-depth look at how to better predict, prevent, and manage preeclampsia. The President's Workshop on Preeclampsia takes place during SMFM's [41st Annual Pregnancy Meeting](#), Jan. 25-30, an all-virtual event.

Some of the topics to be discussed include:

- How to better determine who is at risk of developing preeclampsia
- Implications on future cardiovascular health
- Impacts on long-term mental health and quality of life
- Therapies and strategies for prevention, including statins and widespread use of aspirin

"Preeclampsia is one of the leading causes of pregnancy-related deaths in the world, affecting an estimated 5 to 8 percent of all pregnancies," says SMFM President Judette Louis, MD, MPH. "As healthcare providers, we need to do a better job of understanding and treating this serious condition."

Preeclampsia may also be a precursor to a woman's future heart health. "With American Heart Month coming up in February, this is a prime time to raise awareness that women who develop preeclampsia during pregnancy are at greater risk for developing cardiac problems later in life," says Louis.

In addition to high blood pressure, warning signs may include high levels of protein in the urine, as well as other symptoms that are common during a healthy pregnancy, such as headaches, abdominal pain, nausea or vomiting, shortness of breath, and swelling.

“Because many of these symptoms can occur during a healthy pregnancy, it’s easy for women and their doctors to overlook the warning signs,” says Preeclampsia Foundation CEO Eleni Z. Tsigas, who is also a two-time preeclampsia survivor.

Tsigas says it’s important to educate women about the warning signs, pointing out that fewer than half of even well-educated women know the signs and symptoms of preeclampsia.

SMFM and the Preeclampsia Foundation will host a Twitter chat, “Let’s Talk about Pregnancy Complications,” with the parenting website, [BabyCenter](#), on Jan. 26 at 3:00 pm Eastern Time. Women will share their personal stories with preeclampsia to help get the word out about this serious condition, along with warning signs to be on the lookout for and what women should do. The chat will use the campaign hashtag #MyPreeclampsiaStory.

For more information, visit SMFM’s patient education website at [HighRiskPregnancyInfo.org](#) or the Preeclampsia Foundation’s website at [preeclampsia.org](#).

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About SMFM

The Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine (SMFM) is a non-profit, membership organization based in Washington, DC. With more than 5,000 physicians, scientists and women’s health professionals around the world, the Society supports the clinical practice of maternal-fetal medicine by providing education, promoting research and engaging in advocacy to optimize the health of high-risk pregnant women and their babies. SMFM hosts an annual scientific meeting in which new ideas and research related to high risk pregnancies are unveiled and discussed. For more information, visit [SMFM.org](#) and connect with the organization on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). For the latest 2020 Annual Meeting news and updates, follow the hashtag #smfm21.

About the Preeclampsia Foundation

The Preeclampsia Foundation is a patient advocacy organization that provides information, education, and support for those impacted by preeclampsia and other hypertensive disorders of pregnancy. In 2013, the nonprofit launched the Preeclampsia Registry, a data base that brings together survivors, family members, and researchers with the common goal of advancing knowledge and treatment of preeclampsia. For more information, visit [preeclampsia.org](#) and connect with the organization on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [YouTube](#).