January 4, 2017

The Honorable Sylvia Mathews Burwell  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Resources  
200 Independence Ave SW  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Burwell,

On behalf of the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine (SMFM), we are writing to urge you to begin implementation of Sec. 2041 of the 21st Century Cures Act (P.L. 114-255), as soon as possible. As you are aware, Sec. 2041 creates the Task Force on Research Specific to Pregnant Women and Lactating Women at HHS to address gaps in knowledge and research regarding safe and effective therapies for pregnant and lactating women.

SMFM strongly believes that this provision’s implementation will begin a crucial dialogue and create a framework by which we, as physicians treating high-risk pregnant women, can better advise and treat our patients.

By and large, this is a public health issue. With nearly four million women giving birth each year and more than three million breastfeeding, we know that nearly all of these women will take a medication or receive a vaccine during this time. However, we do not know enough about the effects of most drugs on a woman and her pregnancy, or the ways in which pregnancy may alter the uptake, metabolism and potency or efficacy of medications. As more women with chronic diseases, such as diabetes, hypertension, depression and asthma are becoming pregnant, safe and effective medications to manage these ongoing conditions throughout their pregnancy and beyond are needed.

Maternal-fetal medicine (MFM) physicians are the specialists who treat women with chronic conditions and/or women with high-risk pregnancies for other reasons, thus these providers have significant experience and expertise in addressing the need for safe and effective therapies for women during pregnancy. It is therefore imperative that an MFM is appointed to this task force.

SMFM is committed to ensuring that the work of this task force is implemented in a meaningful way, and we look forward to its launch. We stand ready to assist and participate in its progress. We look forward to continuing this important work and ensuring that women have the most...
accurate information to make healthcare decisions. Should you have any questions about this, please contact SMFM’s Chief Advocacy Officer, Katie Schubert, at kschubert@smfm.org or (202) 297-5122.

Sincerely,

Mary Norton, MD  
President

Dan O’Keeffe, MD  
Executive Vice President

Matt J. Granato, LLM, MBA  
Chief Executive Officer

cc. Sen. Lamar Alexander
    Sen. Patty Murray
    Rep. Cathy Castor
    Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler
    Rep. Frank Pallone
    Rep. Fred Upton
    Rep. Greg Walden