the Science of Dissemination and Implementation in Health, more than 100 individuals registered to participate in a special adjunct session on maternal health. The NICHD is prepared to fund implementation research studies and capacity building through 2 implementation research program announcements and training grant mechanisms. Adding implementation research to the list of maternal health research priorities is urgently needed to ensure that evidence generated by research investments is more efficiently and effectively translated into real-world improvements for patients and communities.

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Prioritize implementation research to effectively address the maternal health crisis

We thank Callaghan-Koru and colleagues for their thoughtful and thought-provoking comments in the Letter to the Editors. Although we did not explicitly mention implementation research in our publication, we strongly agree with the authors that prioritization of and investments in implementation research are essential components necessary for a complete research agenda on maternal health.

The intent of the report of the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) workshops was to summarize the workshops’ presentations and discussions. At the Community Engagement Forum for Improving Maternal Health, implementation research was among the topics identified as integral to mitigating maternal morbidity and mortality. Specifically, forum participants mentioned that few implementation research studies are being conducted to determine why effective interventions may not reach patients or segments of the patient population. The difficulty in executing these studies partially stems from the high variability and complexity of hospital cultures and the closing of many labor and delivery units. We appreciate the opportunity to bring greater attention to these remarks.

The NICHD recognizes the role of implementation science in improving the health of pregnant and postpartum individuals. In 2020, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) (led by the NICHD, the NIH Office of the Director, and the Office for Research on Women’s Health) launched the Implementing a Maternal Health and Pregnancy Outcomes Vision for Everyone (IMPROVE) initiative to support research to reduce preventable causes of maternal deaths and improve health for women before, during, and after delivery. The IMPROVE initiative explicitly highlights identifying barriers and opportunities and design strategies for implementing clinical guidelines on blood pressure management, physical activity, and diet tailored to high-risk communities as an area of specific research interests. The NICHD is supporting 4 awards in response to the Notice of Special Interests published under the IMPROVE initiative, totaling about $1 million.

Moreover, the NIH overall encourages research in implementation sciences. Specifically, the NICHD Office of Global Health will hold a virtual meeting addressing dissemination and implementation science on February 24, 2021. These panel discussions and presentations will be recorded and available for future viewing at https://www.nichd.nih.gov/
about/org/od/ogh. Additional research efforts that incorporate a rigorous implementation framework and outcome measures could facilitate and accelerate the application of scientific advances and new evidence into clinical practice to reduce maternal morbidity and mortality.

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