

# Heart Matters: Cardiac Conditions in Obstetrical Care



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## Heart Matters: Cardiac Conditions in Obstetrical Care



*By Rachel Wright*

### Introduction

Cardiovascular conditions remain one of the leading causes of maternal morbidity and mortality in the United States. The Alliance for Innovation on Maternal Health (AIM) developed the Cardiac Conditions in Obstetrical Care (CCOC) Patient Safety Bundle to help healthcare teams improve outcomes through standardized, evidence-based practices. This newsletter highlights the bundle's key components and practical applications for nursing staff.

### Why This Matters

- Cardiovascular disease is the leading indirect cause of maternal death in the U.S.
- Many patients who experience cardiac events during pregnancy were not previously identified as high risk.

- The AIM Cardiac Conditions Bundle follows the '5R' Framework: Readiness, Recognition & Prevention, Response, Reporting & Systems Learning, and Respectful, Equitable & Supportive Care.
- Nurses play a vital role in early recognition, education, and coordination of care.



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## Overview of the AIM Cardiac Conditions Safety Bundle

### ★ Readiness

Ensure your unit has clear protocols for managing pregnant or postpartum patients with known or suspected cardiac conditions. Confirm multidisciplinary team readiness and access to emergency equipment.

### ★ Recognition & Prevention

Screen all patients for cardiac risk factors such as hypertension, congenital heart disease, or cardiomyopathy. Educate patients on warning signs—shortness of breath, chest pain, palpitations—and when to seek help.

### ★ Response

Establish rapid response pathways for cardiac emergencies in obstetric settings. Participate in simulation drills and know your escalation triggers.

### ★ Reporting & Systems Learning

Support data collection, participate in post-event debriefs, and help identify opportunities to improve care processes.

### ★ Respectful, Equitable & Supportive Care

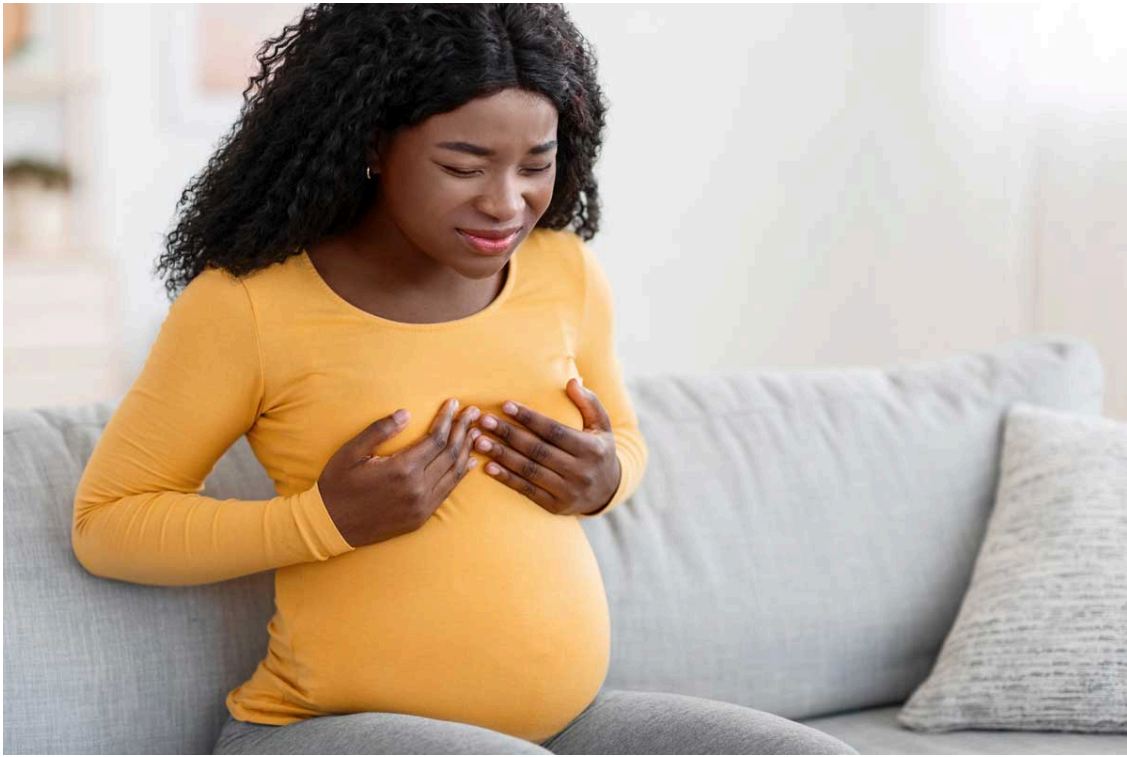
Provide culturally sensitive education, advocate for equitable care access, and ensure postpartum cardiac follow-up is coordinated.



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### • **Practical Tips for Nurses**

- Screen every patient with a CVD risk assessment tool.
  - Include cardiac risk factors in all hand-offs.
  - Monitor high-risk patients more frequently and report subtle changes early.
  - Participate in simulations and ongoing education on cardiac conditions in obstetrics.
  - Provide clear discharge instructions for warning signs and follow-up care.
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## CALL TO ACTION

1. Review the AIM Cardiac Conditions Bundle at [saferbirth.org](https://saferbirth.org).
2. Identify one change you can implement to improve readiness.
3. Review GaPQC Cardiac webinars at <https://georgiapqc.org/maternal-cardiac-lectures>
4. Share lessons learned during debriefs to strengthen your team.

### **Join the Georgia Perinatal Quality Collaborative (GaPQC) CCOC Initiative**

The GaPQC is implementing the Cardiac Conditions in Obstetrical Care (CCOC) Initiative statewide. Participation provides access to implementation tools, data support, and learning collaboratives focused on improving cardiac safety.

To enroll your hospital or learn more, contact:

Laura Pattillo – Director of Perinatal Quality Improvement

Email: [laura.pattillo@dph.ga.gov](mailto:laura.pattillo@dph.ga.gov)

Your engagement helps advance maternal health equity and safety across Georgia.

## Resources

- AIM Cardiac Conditions in Obstetrical Care Bundle – [saferbirth.org](https://saferbirth.org)

- IHI Implementation Guide – [ihi.org](http://ihi.org)
- [Georgia Perinatal Quality Collaborative - georgiapqc.org](http://georgiapqc.org)

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