

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Focuses on Evidence Gaps Related to Women's Health in 2015 Report to Congress

WASHINGTON, D.C. – November 18, 2015 – Today, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) released its annual Report to Congress, highlighting five high-priority evidence gaps related to women's health. The report also highlights the Task Force's continued commitment to helping clinicians and patients work together to make the best decisions about preventive health care.

The Task Force calls for more research in five areas of women's health beyond pregnancy and reproductive health. These areas include:

- Intimate partner violence, illicit drug use, and mental health conditions
- Thyroid dysfunction
- Vitamin D deficiency, vitamin D and calcium supplementation, and osteoporosis
- Cancer
- The implementation of preventive services like screenings, counseling, and preventive medications in practice

The report notes that research in these areas would produce much needed evidence to improve the health and health care of women in the United States.

"The Task Force recognizes the impact of preventive services on the health and well-being of women. Preventive services improve women's health and can yield benefits for their families and communities as well," says Task Force vice chair Kirsten Bibbins-Domingo, Ph.D., M.D., M.A.S. "It is our hope that by highlighting gaps in evidence related to this important population, researchers will target their efforts to improve the quality of preventive health care for all women."

While medical and scientific understanding of women's health is expanding, historically the focus has been on pregnancy and childbirth. Recently, however, research on women's health has focused on prevention of diseases that are more prevalent or serious in women and on identifying the risk factors and interventions that are different for women. Modern considerations of women's health also take into account how social and economic considerations factor into well-being across the lifespan.

The report also provides an update on the Task Force's activities over the past year, during which it continued to focus on making its work clear and relevant to health care professionals and patients. Since October 2014, the public has had the opportunity to comment on draft research plans and draft recommendation statements on topics ranging from screening for speech and language delay in children to aspirin use to prevent cardiovascular disease and cancer. In addition, this year the Task Force published multiple final recommendation statements peer-reviewed journals and on its Web site.

"The Task Force is proud of the work it accomplished in 2015. We published a number of new recommendations to guide clinicians and patients as they make decisions about preventive care services, while continuing to focus on the value of public input throughout the process," says Task Force chair Al Siu, M.D., M.S.P.H. "In 2016, we will continue our work with more than 40 active topics, including topics related to the health and well-being of women."

The “Fifth Annual Report to Congress on High-Priority Evidence Gaps for Clinical Preventive Services” can be found on the Task Force Web site at <http://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/Page/Name/reports-to-congress>.

The Task Force is an independent, volunteer panel of national experts in prevention and evidence-based medicine that works to improve the health of all Americans by making evidence-based recommendations about clinical preventive services such as screenings, counseling services, and preventive medications.

Contact: Nicole Raisch at Newsroom@USPSTF.net / (202) 572-2044