

**Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee (MMMRC)**  
**FINAL Meeting Minutes**  
**Friday, March 03, 2023**  
**9:00 a.m.**

**Virtual: Teams Meeting Platform**  
**Location: Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS)**  
**Robert Bernstein Building**  
**Room K-100, First Floor**  
**1100 West 49th Street**  
**Austin, Texas 78756**

**Agenda Item 1: Call to order, welcome, roll call, and introductions**

Dr. Carla Ortique, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. Dr. Ortique announced this was the Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee (MMMRC) meeting.

Dr. Ortique, Chair, acknowledged the work done by the committee honors the lives that have been lost, and requested a moment of silence in honor of the women as well as their families and communities that have been forever impacted by the loss of a mother.

Dr. Ortique turned the floor over to Ms. Tessa Buck-Ragland, HHSC, Advisory Committee Coordination Office. Ms. Buck-Ragland read logistical announcements, called roll, and asked the members to provide a brief introduction and determined with 10 members present a quorum was reached.

Table 1: Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee attendance Friday, March 03, 2023, meeting.

MEMBER NAME	IN ATTENDANCE
Dr. Eumenia Castro	Yes – joined at 9:18 a.m.
Dr. Kendall Crowns	No
Dr. Meitra Doty	Yes
Dr. Catherine Eppes	Yes
Dr. Kelly Fegan-Bohm	Yes
Dr. Manda Hall	Yes
Dr. James Hill	Yes
Dr. Sherri Onyiego	Yes
Dr. Carla Ortique, Chair	Yes
Dr. Lavannya Pandit	Yes
Ms. Nancy Puig	No
Dr. Amy Raines-Milencov	No
Dr. Christina Murphey	No
Dr. Patrick Ramsey, Vice Chair	Yes
Dr. Robin Page	No
Ms. Nakeenya Wilson	Yes
VACANT	

Yes: Indicates attended the meeting

No: Indicates did not attend the meeting

Dr. Ortique offered a brief overview of the work of the Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee in Texas, addressed vacancies in the Committee and the application process of potential members, and gave thanks to the Members and Staff for their work and countless hours. Dr. Ortique returned the floor to Ms. Buck-Ragland, ACCO to proceed with agenda item 2.

## **Agenda Item 2: Consideration of December 9, 2022, draft meeting minutes**

Ms. Buck-Ragland noted members received a copy of the December 9, 2022, meeting minutes in their electronic packet and she called for any edits or changes. With no noted edits Ms. Buck-Ragland requested a motion to accept the December 9, 2022, minutes as written.

### **MOTION:**

Dr. Kelly Fegan-Bohm made the motion to approve the December 9, 2022, meeting minutes as written. Dr. Patrick Ramsey seconded the motion. Ms. Buck-Ragland conducted a roll call vote, and the motion passed with eleven approvals, no disapprovals, and no abstention.

## **Agenda Item 3: Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee Subcommittee**

Dr. Carla Ortique introduced Sherri Onyiego, MD, Member & Patrick Ramsey, MD, Vice Chair to provide members an update on the Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee Subcommittee.

### **Highlights included:**

#### **Dr. Sherri Onyiego – MMMRC Subcommittee on Maternal Health Disparities Update**

The MMMRC Subcommittee on Maternal Health Disparities met on February 10, 2023 and reflected on goals and past accomplishments. Some of their goals include research and root cause analysis of maternal mortality and advocacy for coverage and intervention for women of reproductive age.

The MMMRC Subcommittee on Maternal Health Disparities has requested support, as it relates to the Discrimination Assessment and Social Determinants of Health (DASH) Facilitated Discussion Tool. The committee would like to spotlight differences in patient race and socioeconomic status. They would like more support for key informant interviews. The MMMRC Subcommittee on Maternal Health Disparities is also engaged in benchmarking with other states to see how key informant interviews are used in their review process(es) and would like to refine the DASH tool, broadening areas of structural discrimination, expanding clarifications and definitions, and adding a technical guide access for users.

The MMMRC Subcommittee on Maternal Health Disparities noted exceptional items requests by DSHS for more staffing for the Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Operations Branch and reimbursement for travel for MMMRC members.

Carla Ortique, MD, comment - The work done thus far on the DASH tool has been used by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in collaboration with the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), to develop a tool to be used by abstractors for review committees across the country, to standardize the review process.

#### **Dr. Patrick Ramsey – Subcommittee on COVID-19 Update**

The Subcommittee on COVID-19 is considering the impact of COVID-19 on maternal care and the stresses COVID-19 placed on patients, families, the healthcare system and communities as a whole. Cases for the 2020 cohort are now being reviewed. The committee has spotlighted direct and indirect impacts arising from COVID-19.

Direct impacts include vaccination challenges, misinformation regarding medical management and failure to timely consider that pregnant women were at risk for unfavorable outcomes due to COVID-19. There were many variants to deal with as well.

Indirect impacts include vaccine hesitancy, shortages and misinformation, healthcare staffing issues, resource depletions and deficiencies and lack of support systems for patients and their families during the pandemic. The MMMRC Sub-committee on COVID-19 will be examining these impacts on the outcomes for pregnant women and for women in the one-year post-partum period.

Dr. Ortique comment - Future pandemics should be anticipated. Pregnant women should be center when considering pandemic-era healthcare. Black pregnant women should be centered as the norm, with regards to any recommendations that come from the Review Committee, with regards to pandemic-era healthcare.

#### **Agenda Item 4: Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee Operational and Maternal Health and Safety Initiative Updates**

Dr. Carla Ortique introduced Ms. Audrey Young, MPH DSHS, Maternal and Child Health Unit Director, to provide updates.

#### **Highlights included:**

**Audrey Young** – Director, Maternal and Child Health Unit

The MMMRC met during closed session Thursday, March 2. During that time, the MMMRC reviewed four 2019 cohort cases and 18 2020 cohort cases. There are four 2019-cohort cases left to be reviewed. These will be reviewed in June 2023. The total number of cases in the 2019 cohort is 147. The committee will meet in Executive Closed Session again, later today to review eight additional cases from the 2020-cohort.

DSHS is soliciting applications for the vacant social worker and medical examiner positions on the MMMRC. DSHS will solicit applications to replace those committee members whose appointments will soon expire in early summer.

The Texas AIM initiative has completed their first round of learning sessions on severe hypertension. The team conducted five two-day, in-person trainings during January and February. During that time, 150 hospitals and 532 healthcare workers participated in guided quality improvement trainings. Next steps for the participants include an action period, with monthly topic-related calls, technical assistance, and dedicated time for the hospital teams to test the protocols and processes they want to put in place.

The Texas HearHer initiative is based on the national HearHer campaign. It urges friends, family and healthcare workers to look for maternal warning signs during pregnancy and the one-year post-partum period. It also encourages them to listen to pregnant and post-partum women, hear their concerns, and to get help if something does not feel right. For more information, including resources and testimonial videos, refer to the Texas HearHer website at [dshs.texas.gov/hearhertexas](https://dshs.texas.gov/hearhertexas) .

#### **DISCUSSION:**

Dr. Carla Ortique commented, the MMMRC case cohort is likely to be larger for 2020 than 2019. The Review Committee must become more efficient in reviewing cases, however, the Review Committee can only review cases once they become available. Redaction by the University of North Texas Health Science Center (UNTHSC) is the most time-consuming step in the process. If elimination of that step is approved by the legislature this session, the review process will run much quicker and be much more efficient.

Dr. Manda Hall comment:

DSHS has submitted an exceptional item request to the legislature for assistance due to increasing case cohort numbers.

## **Agenda Item 5: Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee Bylaws**

Dr. Carla Ortique presented the Committee Bylaws to members and discussed proposed amendments.

### **Highlights included:**

Dr. Ortique – A draft copy of the bylaws was previously provided to committee members. A mandatory review of the bylaws must take place every two years. This committee will consider proposed amendments today. From this committee’s discussion, an updated draft will be submitted to the DSHS legal team. The final draft will be provided to Review Committee members 30 days prior to the June committee meeting. DSHS Legal will present the final draft for Review Committee vote at the June meeting.

Dr. Ortique invited comment on proposed bylaws.

Dr. Hall comment- Potential changes will come out of the legislative session. The committee should keep this in mind as they consider any proposed amendments. The bylaws may need to be re-reviewed after the legislative session concludes.

Dr. Ortique response – The legislative session ends on May 31. Because of the 30-day prior review requirement, the committee may not be able to vote on final bylaws at the June meeting.

Dr. Ortique sought further comments.

Dr. Hall – The committee’s vote needs to happen during the open meeting.

Dr. Ortique – seeing no other comments...

Dr. Hall comment – There are typos within the bylaws. The DSHS representative and state epidemiologist are not non-voting, ex officio committee members.

Dr. Ramsey question – There are 17 voting members?

Dr. Ortique question – Are those two positions not appointed? Are they positions which include representation on the committee as part of the position?

Dr. Hall response – Those positions are appointed by the commissioner; however, they do not go through the full review and approval process of other committee member positions.

Dr. Ortique clarifying question – She was under the impression that the Associate Commissioner for MCH was a position on the committee, and whoever occupies that position within DSHS occupies that place on the committee. Is that not the case?

Dr. Hall response – The way the bylaws are currently written, a representative of the Family and Community Health Program, which in and of itself is a typo – it needs to be changed to “within our CHI or MCH”. The bylaws need to be aligned with what is written in statute, which does not name a specific position. The current bylaws name a group of programs which is actually a former name of a division. There are no term time periods for that committee position. The other committee positions go through an application process and have term time periods.

Ms. Wilson question – There is a bill pending in the legislature to add additional seats to the committee. What are the categories for these additional seats?

Dr. Ortique response – One community advocate, and one representative from a Medicaid managed care program.

Dr. Hall comment – There are also some consideration and bills around specialty positions such as anesthesiology and emergency medicine.

Dr. Ortique response– If there are no further comments, we will move to agenda item six.

### **Agenda Item 6: Future Agenda Items**

Dr. Ortique opened discussion for new business and potential agenda items for the next meeting scheduled for June 02, 2023.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

Dr. Ramsey commented, the Review Committee has not had representatives from the perinatal advisory council or the Texas Collaborative for Healthy Mothers and Babies (TCHMB) present at committee meetings, to speak on how recommendations from this committee are used or implemented or what these entities would consider useful contributions from this committee, with regards to recommendations. He would like to see a standing annual report from those two entities. He admits a conflict of interest with both of the organizations. Both organizations use recommendations from this committee to adapt maternal and neonatal rules and he believes that a public hearing from those entities would be helpful.

Dr. Hall comment –Devoting time during the committee meeting to discuss the legislative session and the implementation of any bills that have come through is important.

Dr. Ortique response - Both ideas are great agenda items.

The September MMMRC meeting might be a good time for presentations from collaboratives and the perinatal advisory council. Typically, the Chair or Vice Chair does present at some point – which used to be annually – however, changes during the pandemic may have changed that. There is also some cross-pollination amongst the corners of the quadrangle with Dr. Eppes being with the collaborative, and Dr. Ramsey and Dr. Hill both serving on the PAC and this Review Committee.

With regards to a legislative update, although the committee can put this on the agenda in June, changes will likely occur – given that the legislature frequently extends session and adds special sessions. Preliminary updates may be available at the June meeting, with final updates discussed at the September meeting.

Efficiency in review of cases must be stressed. The Review Committee needs to review a minimum of 30 cases per meeting. Moving forward, Review Committee members should anticipate two days of closed meetings to review cases, to remain contemporary, so that the Review Committee can provide useable, actionable recommendations to the entities that need them, as well as meeting grant requirements for review.

Dr Ortique moved to proceed to agenda item 7 and turned the floor over to Ms. Buck-Ragland.

### **Agenda Item 7: Public Comment**

Per Ms. Buck Raglan, there were no pre-registered to give public comments and no one appeared in person to provide oral comment. Ms. Buck-Ragland turned the floor over to Dr. Ortique.

### **Agenda Item 8: Executive Session: to review cases under Health and Safety Code, Section 34.007 as authorized by Section 34.004.**

Dr. Ortique read the legislation allowing the Review Committee to move into a closed executive session.

Ms. Wilson question – Can public comment be provided before going into closed session?

Dr. Ortique response - No, public comment must be registered via Ms. Buck-Ragland, and Review Committee member comments are not considered public comments.

Ms. Wilson comment – She encouraged the public to take the opportunity to always participate in open committee meetings – not just when times are tough for them. The Review Committee appreciates and welcomes public comments and the sharing of experiences. Many times, during case reviews, the Review Committee has no informant interviews and no personal context to the loss of life. Those who have been impacted have the opportunity to participate in these meetings. The Review Committee is acting to improve the future lives of everyone in Texas that is affected by birth, pregnancy, and post-partum.

Dr. Ortique acknowledged impact of COVID-19 on the Review Committee and their activities.

She announced that it is 10:05 a.m. and the committee is now going into closed session.

The committee will return later in afternoon to reopen the meeting from closed to open session before adjourning for the day, as statutorily required. There will be a break to allow for room turnover and the committee will resume their meeting, in closed session, at 10:30 a.m..

Ms. Buck-Ragland stated the time 10:30 a.m. and announced to members of the public that this concluded the open meeting for the morning and the public was informed that the review committee would return later in the afternoon to open the closed session and then adjourn.

#### **Agenda Item 9: Adjournment**

Dr. Ortique reopened the meeting at 1:27 p.m., thanked members and the public and adjourned at 1:27 p.m.

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Below is the link to the archived video of the March 03, 2023, Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee (MMMRC) that will be available for viewing approximately two years from date meeting was posted on website and based on the DSHS records retention schedule.

[Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee \(MMMRC\)](#)