

Mary Olukotun - University of Alberta

Project: *Access to health services and supports for Black preterm infants in Alberta: A longitudinal case study*



Background

The Black population accounts for majority of preterm births in North America and as a result, Black infants make up a significant proportion of preterm infants in neonatal intensive care units (NICU). Though Canada's preterm birth rate has remained relatively stable over the past decade, Alberta's rate has steadily increased, with the province now reporting the second highest incidence across Canada. Curiously, Black infants have similar to moderately better outcomes in the

NICU when compared to other infants of the same gestational age, however, they experience poorer health outcomes such as higher rates of readmission and mortality after discharge into the community, especially in their first year of life. This shift in outcomes is a concerning phenomenon which disproportionately affects Black preterm infants and is associated with poorer availability and accessibility of resources in the community setting. There is little research exploring the health of Black preterm infants as it relates to health service access in Canada; there are no studies exploring this topic in Alberta. My proposed study aims to address this significant knowledge gap in the existing literature. Interviews will be conducted

with parents of Black preterm infants and their service providers to understand access experiences and perspectives—in particular, how access potentially impacts infants’ wellbeing. Study findings will shed light on access challenges and gaps in the care of Black preterm infants after discharge from the NICU and will guide the development of strategies to support their short- and long-term health outcomes in the community setting.

Mary Olukotun (she/her) is a registered nurse with a clinical background in hematology/oncology, palliative care/hospice, general medicine, and maternal/newborn health. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and is currently a doctoral student in the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Alberta. Her doctoral work examines access to health services and supports for Black preterm infants in the community setting. Broadly, her research interests include maternal and child health, immigrant health, and the health and wellbeing of Black populations. Mary is particularly interested in critical qualitative inquiry that explores how intersecting social identities influence access, health, and wellbeing.