



# Early Pregnancy Complications and Loss Workshop

Collaboration for Innovative Solutions and  
Implementation Pathways to Improve Care in Ontario

**SickKids Patient Support Centre**

175 Elizabeth St, Toronto, ON M5G 2G3

Level 4 – Innovation Room, Inclusion Room and Integrity Room

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## Land Acknowledgment

We would like to begin by acknowledging our sincere gratitude for the opportunity to work and live on this beautiful land that has been occupied by First Nations since the beginning of time. This land, on which this workshop is being hosted, is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee, Wendat and Anishinaabe Peoples. Today, Toronto is covered by the Toronto Purchase, Treaty No.13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit. Toronto is now home to Indigenous Peoples from across Turtle Island.

We recognize that Indigenous practices of health and well-being have been in place in this territory since time began and are maintained to this day. We are committed to honoring and improving our knowledge on these practices. We recognize the harms and mistakes of the past and we take meaningful steps toward reconciliation by recognizing our responsibility for building and improving relationships with First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

# Introduction

**In Canada, most pregnancy losses occur in the first trimester, often before many pregnant individuals have a healthcare provider, whether obstetrical or otherwise.**

As comprehensive perinatal care offered by family physicians is less common, patients experiencing early pregnancy complications like bleeding or pain may not know to seek help from their family physicians, and instead are frequently directed by telehealth providers to visit the nearest emergency department.

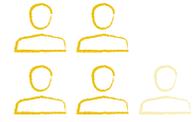
**This situation not only leads to negative patient experiences but also compromises patient safety.**

In Ontario, there are some care models, frequently known as Early Pregnancy Assessment Clinics (EPACs), that are equipped to care for those experiencing complications and/or loss. Unfortunately, these are few and far between, and consequently, four in five people in Ontario with symptoms of pregnancy loss seek care in an emergency department (ED).

While EDs provide critical services, they are not the optimal environment for the sensitive and specialized care required in these situations. Consequently, patients' needs for privacy, information and compassionate care often remain unmet, and many individuals report feeling unsupported, stigmatized, and lacking proper follow-up care,

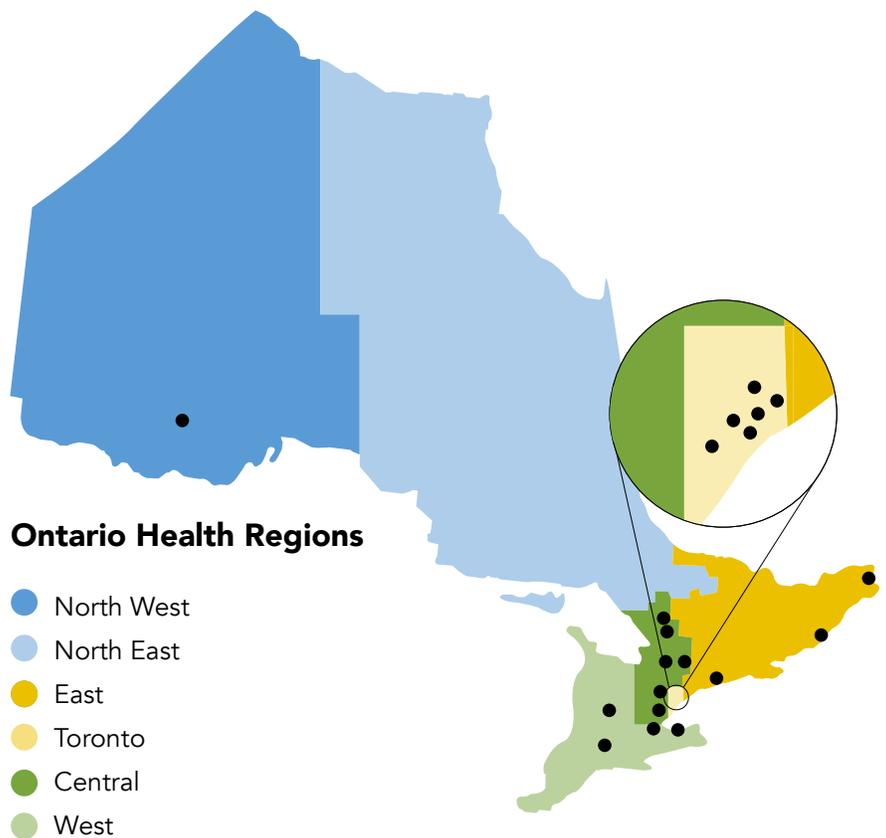
particularly those whose losses occur in early pregnancy.

In 2020, Ontario Health and the PAIL Network released *Early Pregnancy Complications and Loss Quality Standard: Care for Adults in All Settings*, which aims to address care for people experiencing pregnancy complications and loss. While this Quality Standard helps healthcare professionals know what care they should be offering, there is still work to be done to ensure a high-quality, equitable system of care is available across the province.



**4 in 5**  
people in Ontario with symptoms of pregnancy loss seek care in an emergency department (ED)

## Early Pregnancy Assessment Clinic (EPAC) Locations in Ontario



# Workshop Objectives

**Early pregnancy complications and loss are significant issues experienced by many in Ontario, with an estimated 20% of pregnancies ending in miscarriage.**

Nearly 80% of these occur in the first trimester, often before individuals have an established obstetrical care provider. The Provincial Council for Maternal and Child Health (PCMCH), the Pregnancy and Infant Loss (PAIL) Network, and Better Outcomes Registry & Network (BORN) Ontario have organized an Early Pregnancy Complications and Loss Workshop in order to bring government partners, healthcare professionals and those with lived experience together from across the province. This workshop will allow all to collaborate on the development of innovative solutions and implementation pathways for province-wide adoption with a single goal in mind: to improve the quality of care for those experiencing early pregnancy complications and loss.

Through presentations and panel discussions from experts and those with lived experience, in combination with breakout session exercises, the workshop aims to achieve the following objectives:



**Evaluate** the current state and delivery methods of care for early pregnancy complications and loss against the *Quality Standard for Early Pregnancy Complications and Loss*.

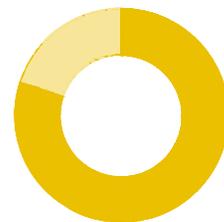
[READ THE REPORT](#)



**Assess** alternative care models for managing early pregnancy complications and loss.



**Formulate** solutions to ensure equitable, high-quality care systems are available across the province.



Nearly  
**80%**  
of miscarriages  
occur in the first  
trimester

# Insights

**56.5%**

of ED visits for EPCL were made by patients between 25 and 34 years of age.<sup>1</sup>

**Almost half**

of ED visits for EPCL were for hemorrhage in early pregnancy and threatened early pregnancy loss, while the next most common reasons for EPCL ED visits were for spontaneous and missed abortion, and ectopic pregnancy.<sup>1</sup>

More than  
**30,000 patients**

who visited the emergency department (ED) were diagnosed with an early pregnancy complication and/or loss (EPCL).

These patients returned for a total of

**48,307**

emergency department visits.<sup>1</sup>

**Almost 90%**

of patients with EPCL were discharged home after their ED visit, with a small percentage leaving without being seen or treated by a service provider.<sup>1</sup>

Repeat ED visits for any condition after an initial visit for EPCL were

**higher in younger age groups.<sup>2</sup>**

Those living in lowest-income neighbourhoods had

**more repeat ED visits**

for any condition within 30 days of an initial visit for tubal ectopic pregnancy and complications.<sup>2</sup>

# Workshop Agenda

# Workshop Agenda

**8:00 a.m. NETWORKING AND BREAKFAST**

**9:00 a.m. WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS**



**Sanober Diaz,**  
Provincial Council for Maternal  
and Child Health (PCMCH)

**9:10 a.m.**

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

Understanding the Landscape:  
Early Pregnancy Complications  
and Loss in Ontario



**Dr. Catherine Varner,**  
Sinai Health System



**Dr. Modupe Tunde-Byass,**  
North York General Hospital

**9:30 a.m.**

Reflections From Almost 20 Years of Leading  
an Early Pregnancy Assessment Clinic (EPAC)  
at North York General Hospital (NYGH)



**Dr. Modupe Tunde-Byass,**  
North York General Hospital

**9:40 a.m.**

Group Introductions and  
Workshop Expectations

**9:55 a.m.**

**UNDERSTANDING EARLY PREGNANCY  
LOSS AND COMPLICATIONS**



**Michelle La Fontaine,**  
Pregnancy and Infant Loss  
(PAIL) Network

**10:00 a.m.**

Personal Journeys: Reflections on  
Early Pregnancy Complications and Loss



**Facilitation by Brandon Drouillard,**  
Pregnancy and Infant Loss  
(PAIL) Network



**Isabel Paola Jaramillo**



**Nicole Leijh**



**Sarah Rogers**

**10:30 a.m.**

**BREAK**

10:45 a.m.

**TECHNOLOGY-DRIVEN CARE MODELS:  
ENSURING TIMELY ACCESS TO THE  
RIGHT CARE**

10:45 a.m.

Easing the Burden of Accessing Care:  
Midland Midwives by the Bay Self-Referral  
Model for Early Pregnancy Assessment



**Lynne-Marie Culliton,**  
Midland Midwives By The Bay

11:00 a.m.

Call Auntie: Strengthening the Wellbeing  
of Indigenous Communities



**Cheryllee Bourgeois,**  
Seventh Generation Midwives  
Toronto

11:15 a.m.

Virtual Medical Abortion Care in Ontario



**Tricia Provost,**  
Lady Dunn Health Centre and  
Wawa Family Health Team

11:30 a.m.

Panel Discussion

11:45 a.m.

**LUNCH**

12:30 p.m.

**INNOVATIVE CARE MODELS:  
GUIDING PATIENTS TO THE RIGHT CARE,  
RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT PROVIDER**

12:30 p.m.

Integrated Pregnancy Program (IPP) at Sioux  
Lookout Meno Ya Win Health Centre



**Dr. Lianne Finn,**  
Sioux Lookout Meno Ya Win  
Health Centre

12:45 p.m.

Virtual Wraparound Care after an Emergency  
Department (ED) Visit: Improving Education  
and Follow-Up Care Coordination with an  
ED Nurse Navigator



**Dr. Catherine Varner,**  
Sinai Health System

1:00 p.m.

Midwifery-Led Early Pregnancy Clinic (EPC) at  
Michael Garron Hospital



**Shezeen Suleman,**  
Michael Garron Hospital

1:15 p.m.

Mount Sinai Fertility: A Program to Support  
Patients Experiencing Early Pregnancy  
Complications and Loss



**Dr. Vanessa Bacal,**  
Sinai Health System

1:30 p.m.

Panel Discussion

1:45 p.m.

**BREAK**

2:00 p.m.

**WORLD CAFE BREAKOUT DISCUSSION:  
ADDRESSING PROVINCIAL GAPS –  
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

2:00 p.m.

1. Navigation – Referral and Initial Consult
2. Navigation – Follow-Up After Initial Visit and Consultation
3. Technology Enablers and Information Management
4. Compassionate Care

3:15 p.m.

Prioritizing Recommendations and Report Back



**Brittney Masters**

3:45 p.m.

Closing Remarks



**Alicia St. Hill,**  
Better Outcomes Registry  
and Network (BORN) Ontario

3:55 p.m.

Strong Woman's Song



**Joanna Diindiisikwe Simmons,**  
Pregnancy and Infant Loss  
(PAIL) Network

**Speakers**

# Speakers

## Patient and Family Advisors



### Isabel Paola Jaramillo

#### **Elementary School Teacher and Pregnancy and Infant Loss (PAIL) Network Volunteer**

She first connected with PAIL in December 2018, a month after the loss of her son Sawyer at 18 weeks pregnant. Since then, Paola has experienced two more pregnancy losses and undergone fertility treatments. After a high-risk pregnancy, she welcomed her son Rafa, nearly four years after losing Sawyer. Paola began

participating in family panels to prevent others from facing similar heartbreak and to honour Sawyer's memory. After a break during her pregnancy with Rafa, she was eager to continue her volunteer work. Outside of PAIL, Paola enjoys reading, music, travel and spending time with Rafa before he starts daycare.



### Nicole Leijh

#### **Registered Social Service Worker and Pregnancy Loss and Complication Taskforce, Women and Children's Health Network (WCHN)**

She shares her home with her loving husband and their young son. Nicole has endured the loss of three babies, an experience that has deeply shaped her perspective and commitment to helping others. Nicole's journey has fueled her passion for supporting others through similar challenges and advocating for greater awareness

and understanding of these issues. She feels fortunate to be part of the Women and Children's Health Network and their Pregnancy Loss and Complication Taskforce, where she plays a vital role in educating and supporting the community about pregnancy loss.



### Sarah Rogers

#### **Executive Director, Victim Services of Peel, and Pregnancy and Infant Loss (PAIL) Network Volunteer**

Sarah holds a Master of Social Work Degree from the University of Windsor, is a Registered Social Worker, and a Certified Yoga Instructor. She is passionate about women's issues and addressing the gender-based violence epidemic, having served in the victim services sector for close to 20 years. Sarah has been an active Family Panelist Volunteer with the Pregnancy and Infant

Loss Network (PAIL) for the past five years after experiencing 1.5 years of infertility and two traumatic back-to-back early pregnancy losses in 2017 and 2018. Sarah envisions a healthcare system where all loss parents are informed, supported, and treated with compassion, dignity and respect throughout their loss and beyond.

# Speakers

## Keynote Speakers



### Dr. Catherine Varner

**Emergency Physician, Mount Sinai Hospital and Associate Professor, Department of Family and Community Medicine, University of Toronto**

She is the Deputy Director of the Schwartz / Reisman Emergency Medicine Institute (SREMI) and Deputy Editor of the *Canadian*

*Medical Association Journal (CMAJ)*. Her research focus is pregnancy and postpartum care in the emergency department.



### Dr. Modupe Tunde-Byass

**Obstetrician and Gynaecologist, North York General Hospital (NYGH) and Associate Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, University of Toronto**

Dr. Modupe Tunde-Byass is a Fellow of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of the UK and The Royal College of Surgeons of Canada. She is also the inaugural President of the Black Physicians of Canada (BPC) where her work focuses on advocacy, mentorship of Black learners, community building, leadership, and collaboration with key national organizations. She is

passionate about maternal mortality, morbidity and birthing experiences in the Black population. Dr. Tunde-Byass is a fierce advocate of access and care of pregnant individuals with early pregnancy complications and loss having completed her residency in the UK when the concept of Early Pregnancy Assessment was being developed. She founded the EPAC at NYGH in 2005.

# Speakers

## Panelists



### Lynne-Marie Culliton

#### Registered Midwife, Midland Midwives By The Bay

She has been offering midwifery services in the Midland area since 2008, when she founded Midwives Nottawasaga. A graduate of McMaster University's Midwifery Education Program in 2002, Lynne-Marie has practiced as a rural midwife in Owen Sound, Collingwood, and now Midland. Recognizing the need for a dedicated midwifery practice in

the Midland community, she worked to establish Midland Midwives by the Bay, which officially launched in 2018. Currently, Lynne-Marie is focused on providing care through the Georgian Bay Women's Clinic, which offers comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, including first-trimester care and all its outcomes.



### Cherylee Bourgeois

#### Métis Midwife, Seventh Generation Midwives Toronto

Cherylee is a Mother of three, Aunty to many and a Metis Midwife at Seventh Generation Midwives Toronto. She graduated from Toronto Metropolitan University Midwifery Education program in 2007 and worked as a Registered Midwife for 11 years before giving up registration to work under the authority of the Indigenous community under the Ontario exemption clause for Aboriginal

Midwives. Cherylee sits on the Core-Leadership Circle of the National Aboriginal Council of Midwives and has been involved in multiple projects supporting Indigenous communities to bring birth closer to home. She worked as Co-Lead in the establishment of the midwife-led, and Indigenous-governed, Toronto Birth Centre where she continues to serve as President of the Board.



### Tricia Provost

#### Nurse Practitioner Lady Dunn Health Centre and Geraldton District Hospital

Tricia Provost is an award-winning Nurse Practitioner (NP). She graduated from Lakehead University in Thunder Bay. She has been working as a rural NP since 2015. Her interests lie in ER and medical abortion care, and she currently works in the ED at Lady Dunn Health Centre and Geraldton District Hospital.

She provides outpatient abortion care to the surrounding communities. She is also faculty at Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM). When not at work she enjoys fishing, swimming, hiking, and travelling, all while raising her four children in Wawa.



## Dr. Lianne Finn

### **Family Physician, Integrated Pregnancy Program (IPP) Sioux Lookout Meno Ya Win Health Care**

Lianne Finn has had the privilege of living and working in Sioux Lookout, Ontario since 2010, which serves as a healthcare hub for the 33 Anishinew, Ojibway, and Cree First Nations in Northwestern Ontario. After completing her training in Family Medicine at McMaster University, she spent a year specializing in obstetrical care before moving to Sioux Lookout where she joined the Meno Ya Win Health Care Centre OB team, now known as the

Integrated Pregnancy Program (IPP). She is the family physician in Wunnumin Lake First Nation, and also works in Emergency Medicine and Addictions Medicine. Her primary work is in Obstetrics and Addiction care at the IPP. Lianne's three children were all born in Sioux Lookout, and she is deeply grateful for the ways this remarkable community has shaped both her personal and professional life.



## Shezeen Suleman

### **Registered Midwife, Michael Garron Hospital**

Shezeen graduated from Toronto Metropolitan University's Midwifery Education Program in 2011. Before pursuing midwifery, she worked with immigrant youth and families in a variety of capacities for several years. Shezeen is currently a Co-Lead of South Riverdale Community Health Centre's MATCH (Midwifery and Toronto Community Health) Program, where she provides labour and birth care at Michael Garron

Hospital (MGH) and staffs the Early Pregnancy Clinic. In addition to her clinical work, Shezeen serves as the Co-Chair of the Health Network for Uninsured Clients and Co-Chair of the East Toronto Health Partners' (ETHP) Working Group on Uninsured Health Access. She brings her passion for community-rooted work to the provision of perinatal care.



## Dr. Vanessa Bacal

### **Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility (REI) Specialist, Mount Sinai Fertility Assistant Professor, Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, University of Toronto**

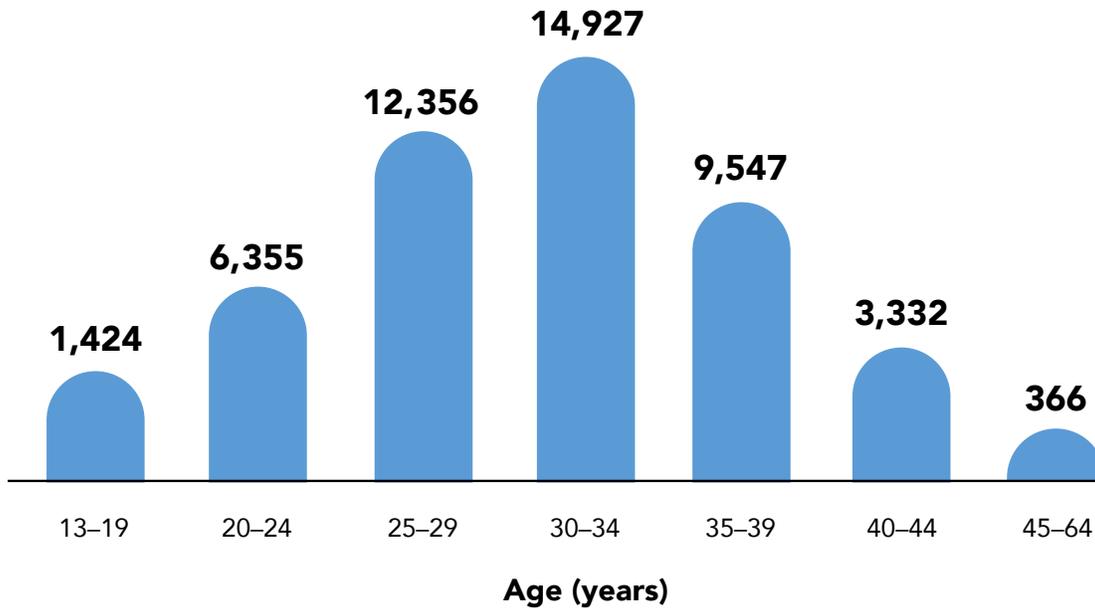
She completed her medical training at McGill University, Obstetrics and Gynaecology residency and Masters of Science in Epidemiology at the University of Ottawa, and REI fellowship at the University of Toronto. Dr. Bacal's

main clinical and research interests include management of early pregnancy loss and recurrent pregnancy loss, evaluating reproductive outcomes after fertility treatments, and improving data quality.

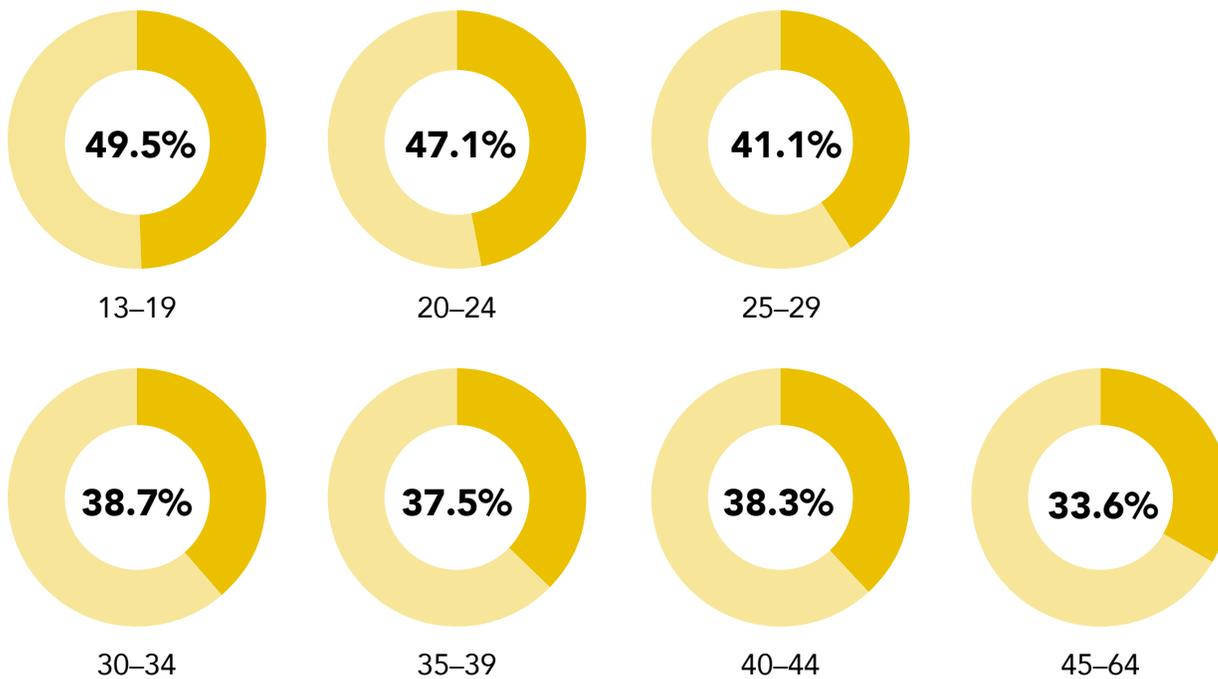
# Appendix

# Data

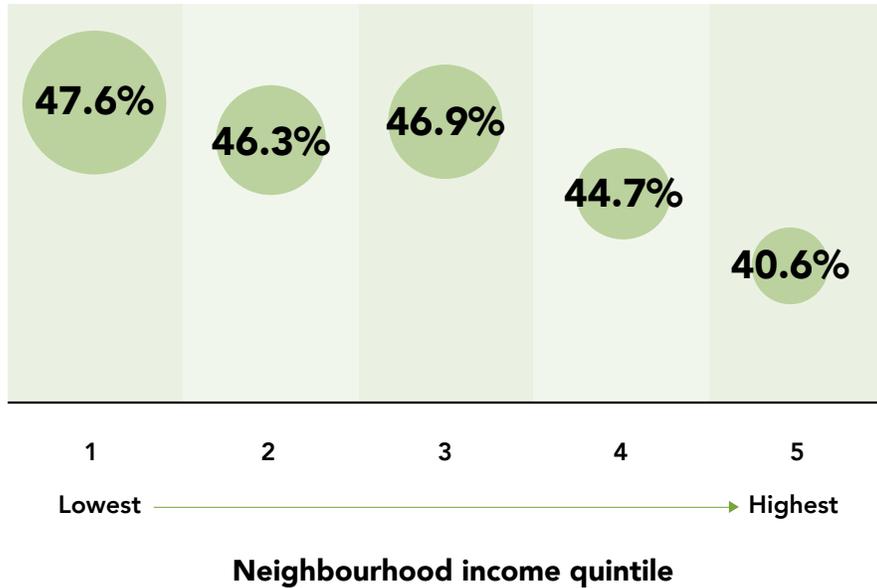
Number of ED visits for patients with an EPCL diagnosis in Ontario by age group, 2017/18<sup>1</sup>



ED revisit for any condition within 30 days of initial visit in ED for EPCL in Ontario by age group, 2017/18<sup>2</sup>

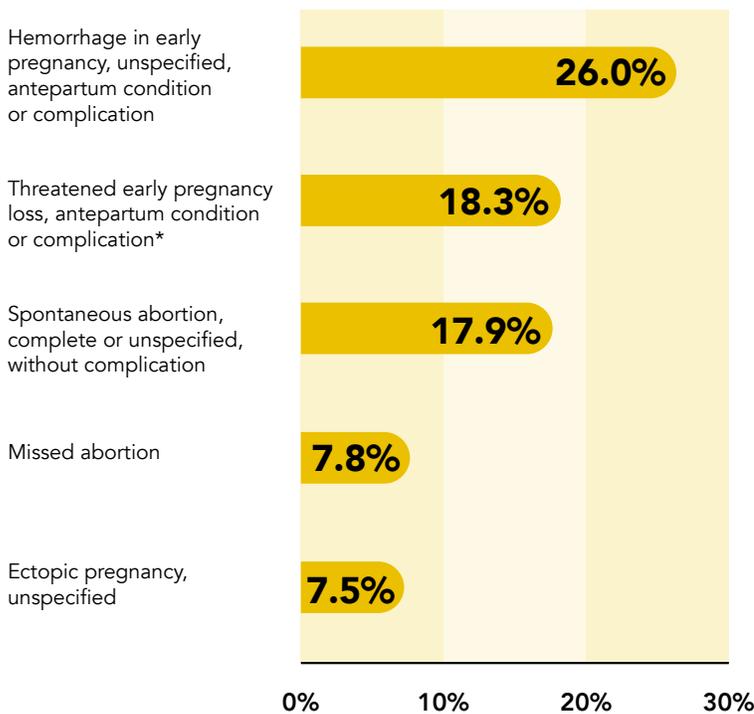


## ED revisit for any condition within 30 days of initial visit in ED for tubal ectopic pregnancy and complications in Ontario by neighbourhood income quintile, 2017/18<sup>2</sup>

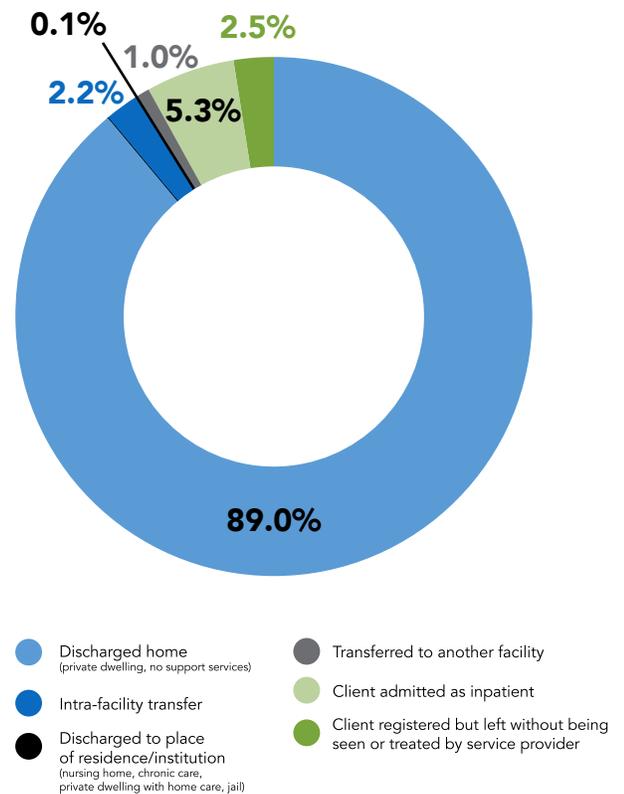


## Proportion of all ED visits with EPCL as main problem diagnosis, by diagnosis type (top 5) in Ontario, 2017/18<sup>1</sup>

Proportion of visits (N = 48,307)



## Disposition status for EPCL ED visits in Ontario, 2017/18<sup>1</sup>



1. 2017/18 Source: National Ambulatory Care Reporting System (NACRS), accessed using IntelliHealth Ontario

2. 2017/18 Source: National Ambulatory Care Reporting System (NACRS), provided by Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences (ICES)

See also: [Early Pregnancy Complications and Loss Quality Standard](#)

