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ACOG Calls for Breakthroughs in Women's Health Research

Washington, DC -- The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), participating in a *Research Means Hope* coalition press conference today, calls for more research funding and investigators in maternal-fetal and women's reproductive health. Research is essential to continued medical successes, bringing real-life benefits: U.S. HIV/AIDS research helped reduce the U.S. mother-to-child HIV transmission rate from 25% to less than 2%, saving millions of babies from disease.

ACOG President Gerald F. Joseph, Jr., MD, calls for more success stories: "Our Nation needs extensive research on preterm births and other issues critical to women's health. Research funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act end in 2010. We call for two companion efforts to continue this research momentum. First, Congress should fully fund women's health research at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Second, we need more women's health researchers."

Institutional training and career development opportunities will help ensure an adequate number of researchers in reproductive sciences and women's health. ACOG urges Congress to encourage foundations and societies to support women's health scientists through bridge grant programs.

The NIH research has made great progress in women's health; NIH research led to faster diagnosis and treatment of choriocarcinoma, a malignant tumor of placental tissue that now has a 90-95% cure rate. Additional NIH funding could lead to similar breakthroughs into the causes of preterm birth.

"Not only does prematurity contribute to serious health problems for the child, it places a great emotional and financial strain on families, and a tremendous financial burden on our health care system," says Dr. Joseph.

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Preterm births occur in 12.7% of all pregnancies in the United States, up 35% from 1981. The causes of preterm birth are unknown in a quarter of all cases. More research can help determine which women are at-risk of premature delivery and which interventions work best.

ACOG also urges research on other conditions affecting women and their infants, including maternal mortality and morbidity, the effectiveness of prenatal care, the impact of chronic conditions during pregnancy, racial and ethnic disparities, and drug safety during pregnancy. Translational research can turn clinical discoveries into bedside treatments, improving outcomes for millions of women and newborns in the future.

ACOG supports *Research Means Hope*'s emphasis on medical research funding in FY 2011.

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The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists is the national medical organization representing over 53,000 members who provide health care for women.