Oral health may not be the first thing people associate with pregnancy. But researchers believe that pregnant women may have the key to better understanding the factors that can lead to cavities in children. These factors include genetics, diet, general health, oral hygiene and mouth germ science.

The CoHRA Center for Oral Health Research at the University of Pittsburgh addresses these obstacles and works to remove them. The Surgeon General wants to change the impression of oral health and disease by reducing disparities and increasing access to dental insurance and public health services. We must continue to have conversations about health topics impacting the black community. Our conversations keep the community engaged throughout the United States and worldwide. They are the most common reason for missing work or school because of the pain associated with them, says Mary Marazita, PhD, professor and vice chair in the Department of Oral Biology at the University of Pittsburgh’s School of Dental Medicine. For young people, having a toothache can lead to not being able to concentrate in school or on a task.

In 2000, the surgeon general’s report Oral Health in America stated that mouth diseases disproportionately affect people who are poor and members of racial and ethnic minority groups. The report outlined the importance of oral health and its relationship to overall health and well-being. Good mouth hygiene helps keep mouths clean and healthy. An unhealthy mouth can lead to other health problems like a heart attack or stroke.

Despite more people having dental insurance and public health programs aimed at combating tooth decay, health disparities exist for Black children. Why do oral health care disparities exist across race and ethnicity? The Surgeon General has asked that everyone take action to maintain the oral health of all Americans and Mary Marazita, PhD, professor and vice chair in the Department of Oral Biology at the University of Pittsburgh’s School of Dental Medicine is doing a lot of work around this.

EB: That’s a great point. Erricka Dr. Marazita stated that dental carries also known as cavities are the most common chronic disease in the United States. Dental carries is also very preventable. The Surgeon General wants to change the impact of oral health and disease by removing obstacles. The Surgeon General also wants to strengthen partnerships that enhance the oral health of minority communities.

BS: There are many obstacles individu- uals face when going to the dental. The Center for Oral Health Research at the University of Pittsburgh addresses these obstacles and works to remove them. Their current focus is on pregnant African American women. They are working to understand why children in Pittsburgh and surrounding areas have more cavities than most other children. They have joined the West Virginia health department to increase access to dental hygienists. They also provide transportation and referrals to local dentists to help eliminate obstacles for participants.

EB: Wow! Dr. Marazita’s team is doing a great job of focusing on obstacles faced by minority communities accessing dental health services. We must continue to have these conversations about health topics impacting the black community. Our conversations keep the community engaged and spread awareness.

BS: Yes, Ms. Bush, our conversation is necessary for changing impressions about oral health in the black community. We are providing our readers with all the tools to positively impact their oral health.

BS: Thank you so much for having this conversation with us, Ms. Bush. It was so wonderful talking with you about oral health. Thank you for inspiring children, youth and adults to take charge of their health. I look forward to next month as we discuss the relationship between physical activity and diabetes.