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Canada Sends Women With Difficult Pregnancies To U.S. For Childbirth

May 5, 2008

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Ontario, Canada (AHN) - Canada has been struggling the past few years with its infant mortality rate that high-risk pregnant Canadian women are being sent to the U.S. to ensure safe deliveries and newborn survival.

In 1990 Canada was sixth ranking in low infant mortality rate, down to 25th spot in 2005, on the same ranking as Estonia with 5.4 deaths per 1,000 live births.

According to Canada's Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, over the past 12 months more than 100 Canadian women classified as high-risk pregnancies had to be sent to the U.S. As of April 1, 2007, British Columbia had sent 80 pregnant women across the border, while Ontario had 28 as of January 2007.

Andre Lalonde, executive vice president of the SOGC attributed the problem to the closure of hospital beds the past 10 years, lack of a national birthing plan and shortage of medical staff. "Neonatologists are very stretched right now... We're so stretched, it's kind of dangerous," Lalonde told the Globe and Mail in a telephone interview from Ottawa.

British Columbia Health Minister George Abbott admitted the province had an unusual jump in premature and sick babies who needed border transfer in 2007 and 2008. In 2007, the number of premature-born babies in the province went up to 3,269 from 3,137 the year before.

According to Health Canada, among the identified health risks of pregnant Canadian women were adolescent pregnancy, smoking, alcohol and substance use, poverty, violence and cultural diversity.

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