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PLENARY

DARWINIAN BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL APPROACHES TO MATERNAL-CHILD HEALTH

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ABSTRACT

Pregnancy and the postpartum period are times of incredible transition during which environmental factors can exert enduring phenotypic impacts on both mothers and children. In this talk, I will present a biopsychosocial evolutionary approach to understanding maternal-child health outcomes, including pubertal timing, growth, and postpartum depression. A key takeaway will be the idea that perceptions, attitudes, and feelings (e.g., subjective stress) often function as intermediaries through which aspects of the environment direct human phenotypes and transmit experience across generations. For example, I will discuss current models of the role of the environmental sensitivity of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis on prenatal programming. Finally, I will discuss how mismatches between the modern world and the ancestral past can lead to negative health consequences.