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the condition occurred in utero, and asked Chong if she'd had any accidents during the pregnancy. The mother considered the question carefully; no, none, she said, but there had been kicking and stomping. Chong, now 38, survived her husband's beatings, but many women do not. And then a minor headline, "Black and Blue Before Birth." According to a new study in the Journal of Midwifery and Women's Health, homicide is the leading cause of death among pregnant women in the United States. Let me read that again. It's amazing. Homicide is the leading cause of death among pregnant women in the United States. Because of the way deaths are reported in this country, however, the link between homicide and pregnancy often goes "unremarked," prompting the American College of Nurse Midwives to call violent death during pregnancy a hidden epidemic. And this is a quote, what pregnant women do not know, says the organization director, Deanne Williams, continuing the quote, is that instead of facing joyful celebration at the announcement of pregnancy, too many face violent death. We have got to do a better job of identifying this problem and helping the women, with their partners, not end up with such a horrific outcome. Researchers reviewed 651 women's autopsy charts from the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner in the District of Columbia between 1988 and 1996 and found 13 pregnancies among the homicides. During that same period, the D.C. State Center for Health Statistics reported only 21 maternal deaths, all from medical causes, such as hemorrhaging and infection, but 13 homicides of pregnant women were not reported as maternal deaths. When included in the maternal death data, pregnancy-assisted (sic) homicides account for 38 percent of the total, according to the study's authors. It's not routine for evidence of pregnancy to be recorded on death certificates, says Dr. Clara Krulewitch, a nurse midwife and epidemiologist at the University of Maryland in Baltimore and the lead author of the study. Because of death coding standards, collecting accurate data on homicide as a cause of maternal mortality is very difficult, she explains. In addition, FBI statistics don't note if a woman was pregnant at the time of a homicide, allowing many violent deaths associated with pregnancy to escape scrutiny. We need to rethink how we measure and collect the data, says Krulewitch. In fact, Washington, D.C., and Maryland have recently adopted policies of recording pregnancy on death certificates. The World Health