



Alcohol and Pregnancy & FASD Research Team



PREVENTION



DIAGNOSIS



THERAPY & MANAGEMENT

RESEARCH SUMMARY

Alcohol Pregnancy & FASD: Midwives knowledge, attitudes & practice

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is characterised by brain damage from prenatal alcohol exposure, the effects are lifelong and may not be seen at birth.

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What was this research about?

Midwives are an influential profession and key group informing women about alcohol consumption in pregnancy and its effects on the fetus and child. They have a primary role in health promotion and the prevention of prenatal alcohol exposure and FASD.

This project investigated WA Country Health Service (WACHS) midwives' knowledge, attitudes and practice about alcohol consumption in pregnancy and FASD.

The objectives of project were to:

- understand midwives' practice in relation to alcohol consumption during pregnancy and FASD;
- determine whether knowledge of the consequences of alcohol consumption in pregnancy and FASD may influence midwives' practice;
- determine factors which may influence midwives' capacity to address alcohol consumption in pregnancy;
- discover whether training about alcohol use is associated with midwives' practice; and
- describe midwives' compliance with the WACHS Alcohol Brief Intervention Policy

What did we do?

We conducted a survey of midwives employed by the WACHS. The survey included questions about alcohol and pregnancy and FASD. Participants had the option to complete the survey as on on-line or paper based questionnaire.

Who took part in this research?

- Researchers
- Steering Group
- Midwifery Reference Group

How did consumers and the community participate in this research?

A consumer and community representative who was a member of the Steering Group provided a community perspective and relevant commentary about:

- attitudes of women toward alcohol use in pregnancy and women's expectations about information and advice provided by midwives about alcohol and pregnancy and FASD

- all activities of the project including advice on the methodology, data collection processes, dissemination of results and potential outcomes of the research; project documents such as the questionnaire and all other material produced by the project

What did we find?

- Nearly all the midwives asked pregnant women about their alcohol consumption during pregnancy
- Nearly all the midwives offered advice about alcohol consumption in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Australian Alcohol Guideline 4 which states “For women who are pregnant or planning a pregnancy, not drinking is the safest option”
- Only two thirds of responding midwives provided information to pregnant women about the effects of alcohol consumption in pregnancy
- Nearly all midwives thought pregnant women expect midwives to advise them about the consequences of alcohol consumption in pregnancy
- half of the midwives expressed some attitudes that may act as barriers and influence their capacity to identify and address alcohol consumption during pregnancy
- Midwives strongly supported professional development

How will this research help?

This research has the potential to:

- influence and contribute to policies and strategies to prevent prenatal alcohol exposure and FASD
- influence and contribute to the development of educational resources for midwives
- influence and contribute to professional development for midwives
- deliver information about midwives’ compliance with the WACHS Alcohol Brief Intervention Policy
- add value to future implementation and evaluation of activities involving midwives that are proposed by the WA Department of Health Child and Youth Health Network FASD Model of Care

Since the completion of this project we have:

- Published 2 papers in research journals [Midwives’ knowledge, attitudes and practice about alcohol exposure and at risk of fetal alcohol spectrum disorders](#)

[Development of a scale to evaluate midwives’ beliefs about assessing alcohol use during pregnancy](#)

- Obtained funding to develop a workforce intervention up-skilling midwives in the documentation and brief intervention around alcohol use in pregnancy, to reinforce the community-wide interventions. [Read more about this project](#)

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Alcohol and Pregnancy & FASD Research Team at Telethon Kids Institute

We have a comprehensive program of research in partnership with community & stakeholders to achieve our goals of developing prevention strategies; building the capacity of health, justice and other professionals to recognise and diagnose FASD; and implementing and evaluating programs for children and young people with FASD and their families.

For information on alcohol & pregnancy, FASD, our research projects, resources and publications visit our website: www.alcoholpregnancy.telethonkids.org.au

There is no safe time or amount of alcohol to drink while planning a pregnancy, when pregnant and when breastfeeding which is why the Australian Guidelines state ‘not drinking alcohol is the safest choice’.

