



Fetal Alcohol Network New Zealand

Kia ora everyone

Im pleased to say our network numbers have swelled once again with a number of people who attended the Therese Grant Seminar in Auckland recently and it is a pleasure to welcome them.

I personally was not able to attend Dr Grant's seminar as I was somewhat ironically visiting Seattle and the Fetal Alcohol Drug Unit where the P-Cap program is based. I understand it was a very interesting and informative presentation and our thanks go to Dr Grant for generously sharing her time and expertise with us. I would also like to thank the Alcohol Healthwatch team - especially Suzanne - and the CADS team for their hard work putting together this learning and sharing opportunity. A PDF of Dr Grant's presentation can be provided upon request.

My visit to North America included attending the Adolescents and Adults with FASD Conference in Vancouver Canada with a focus on mental health. A brief report on that conference will follow shortly. **Meantime below are a few other FASD-related news items from around the world.**

Best wishes

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NEW Online peer reviewed FASD Journal

On November 1, 2007, the Journal of FAS International – JFAS Int – was amalgamated with the Canadian Journal of Clinical Pharmacology, a peer-review journal. The section dedicated to FASD is called Fetal Alcohol Research (FAR). Research published in CJCP/FAR is indexed in PubMed – Medline. The amalgamated CJCP/FAR will continue to be web-based and freely available <http://www.motherisk.org/FAR/>

Economic deficits linked to prenatal alcohol exposure

A study of a Swedish cohort born between 1967-68, an experimental period of extended alcohol availability in some regions of Sweden, has found that the cohort in utero at that time have substantially reduced educational attainments, lower earnings and higher welfare dependence rates as adults compared to surrounding cohorts. The outcome was worse for those born to mothers under age 21, who experienced the largest increase in availability of alcohol during that time. The increase in consumption was so rapid the experiment was stopped after 2 years, making this a unique comparison study of a discrete population. The findings indicated that investment in early-life health may have far reaching effects on economic outcomes later in life. This is the first paper to address the issue in the field of economics adding to a growing body of research documenting adult outcomes from prenatal alcohol exposure. The 49 page document (Nilsson, 2008) is produced by the IFAU - Institute for Labour Market Policy Evaluation - <http://www.ifau.se/upload/pdf/se/2008/wp08-04.pdf>

Medical officer links violence to drinking during pregnancy

(NZ Herald 19/04/08)

Scotland's chief medical officer Dr Harry Burns, said babies born to women who drink heavily in pregnancy develop fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD) which can lead to violent behaviour in adulthood. He was appearing before Holyrood's Health Committee answering questions about the effects of poor parental care of babies and toddlers and called on women to abstain during pregnancy. Dr Burns suggested that the incidence of FASD may be found to be very high in young men being violent but identifying the risk factors early before they fall into violent lifestyles is something that can definitely be achieved. A British Medical Association report last year said FASD can lead to attention deficits, hyperactivity, learning disabilities and poor social understanding but did not mention violence. (Story appeared in the 'Independent')

Australian alcohol guidelines delayed

The draft of the revised *Australian Alcohol Guidelines: health risks and benefits* were released for comment in October 2007. The finalised Guidelines were due to be released in March, but because of the high number of submissions, publication has been delayed. The guidelines are now expected to be released in mid-June 2008. NHMRC received 162 submissions and the information from these submissions is being taken into consideration in developing the final guidelines. They will undergo an international peer review before being published. It is hoped that the final outcome will be that the NHMRC guidelines will continue to advise women who are pregnant and planning pregnancy to avoid alcohol.

Care for Indigenous Australian children to begin in pregnancy

Indigenous children will receive medical care while still in the womb under a Rudd government assault to be announced today on fetal alcohol syndrome and other life-style-related childhood illnesses. Nurses will visit pregnant women in 10 communities in north Queensland and the Northern Territory to talk about "welfare and life choices" under the scheme. The Australian, April 03, 2008. <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/>

An education resource for FASD

The Yukon Government have produced a very useful and comprehensive resource to help guide the delivery of appropriate and effective education services for students with FASD entitled: "Making a difference: Working with students with a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder" [Note 112 pages]

http://www.education.gov.yk.ca/pdf/fasd_manual_2007.pdf