



Media release
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International expert in forensic psychology is visiting NZ to discuss the link between Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and crime

The negative outcomes of drinking during pregnancy will be the focus of a seminar in Auckland tomorrow.

The free seminar entitled 'Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders and Justice' will be held on Wednesday 31 March from 9am till 4pm at Barrycourt Hotel in Parnell. It will explore the link between individuals affected by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and their increased risk of being in trouble with the law.

Here to present the seminar is guest speaker Dr Natalie Novick Brown, an Assistant Professor of Psychology from the University of Washington in Seattle USA and a specialist in forensic psychological assessments for adolescents and adults with FASD.

Dr Novick Brown says that the likelihood of somebody with FASD getting into trouble with the law is much higher than somebody who is unaffected.

"Not everyone with a Fetal Alcohol disorder will commit crime. However the nature of the disability is such, that they are often very good at getting into trouble and not very good at getting out of it.

"Professionals working with affected individuals are able to make a difference by identifying the disability and creatively managing it."

The seminar, hosted by Alcohol Healthwatch, aims to provide important information for those working with at risk individuals here in New Zealand.

Alcohol Healthwatch's Christine Rogan, who coordinates the Fetal Alcohol Network says it is important that people understand the link between drinking during pregnancy and the difficulties this can lead to later in life.

"This harm can easily be prevented, firstly by not drinking alcohol during pregnancy, and secondly by better understanding and support for those children born affected."

Further details about the seminar are available on the Alcohol Healthwatch website, www.ahw.org.nz

Ends

Key facts about FASD

- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) are caused by the effects of maternal alcohol consumption during pregnancy
- The consequences such as the behavioural and learning difficulties are lifelong
- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), the most severe end of the spectrum, is the leading preventable cause of mental retardation in the developed world but accounts for less than 20% of all FASDs
- International estimates suggest that 2-5% of children may be born affected
- When it comes to the brain and nervous system development there is no known safe amount or time to consume alcohol
- One glass of alcohol now and again will not cause serious problem like FAS but alcohol begins to interfere with brain development at very low levels
- A very small proportion of affected children in NZ have received a definitive diagnosis

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