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“A Vital Christian Presence in Social Work”

**FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDERS:
A SOCIAL WORKER’S GUIDE FOR PREVENTION AND
INTERVENTION**

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Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders:
A Social Worker's Guide for Prevention and Intervention

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Objectives



- Articulate the range of consequences associated with drinking during pregnancy.
- Learn the statistics/trends surrounding prenatal alcohol use.
- Describe the key reasons women are reluctant to reveal use.
- Become familiar with screening tools to identify women most at-risk.
- Identify resources that are available in working with this population.
- Discuss practice implications.

Drinking during pregnancy



Drinking during pregnancy can result in a wide range of physical, developmental, emotional, and behavioral consequences.

Severity of effects range from mild to severe, depending on numerous factors. All effects are irreversible.

Fetal alcohol syndrome



Most widely known consequence of alcohol consumption during pregnancy is known as fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS), which is a combination of:

- Facial anomalies
- Growth deficiencies
- Mental impairments

Consequences: Infant and Child



- Fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS)
- Weight gain/growth problems
- Maternal-child bonding
- Learning, memory, language problems
- Problems with executive functioning
- Behavioral difficulties – impulsivity, poor socialization

Consequences: Teens and Adults



Teens

- Existing difficulties exacerbated with onset of puberty
- Increase in risky behaviors such as delinquency and sexual activity

Adults

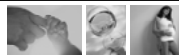
- Inability to live independently
- Increased risk for mental health problems such as depression

Consequences: Family and Society



- Economic Costs of FAS
 - \$5 billion/year to US
 - \$4 million – lifetime cost
- Child Welfare System
 - CPS investigations
 - Foster and adoptive families needed
- Intact Families
 - Manage range of difficulties
 - Deal with providers, schools, people

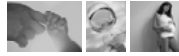
Statistics of alcohol use



There is no safe level of alcohol that can be consumed during pregnancy

Women unaware of their pregnancy may unintentionally damage specific areas of the developing brain by consuming alcohol

Statistics of alcohol use



15% of women in childbearing age are moderate to heavy drinkers.

Half of all pregnancies are unintended

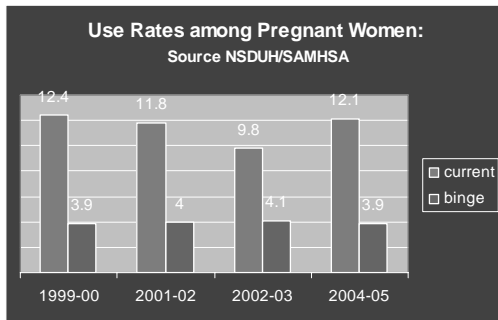
Statistics of alcohol use



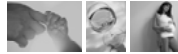
Prenatal alcohol use affects 1 out of every 100 U.S. births

The NIAAA estimates that at least 40,000 infants are born each year affected by prenatal alcohol exposure

Alcohol use statistics



Issues identifying women at-risk



Obstacles for some Physicians:

- Lack of time and training
- Stereo-typing alcohol-use to women in poverty/minority
- Have negative attitudes towards women with substance use problems
- Not feeling secure in diagnosing alcohol-related problems
- SA Treatment ineffective

Reluctance to reveal alcohol use



Obstacles some women face:

- Fear and shame
- Judgmental attitudes of medical staff
- Temptation to underreport amount of alcohol consumption
- Delay of seeking prenatal care until third trimester

Screening Tools for Alcohol Use



CAGE: Adults

- (C) Have you ever felt you should **CUT** down on your drinking?
- (A) Have people ever **ANNOYED** you by criticizing your drinking?
- (G) Have you ever felt bad or **GUILTY** about your drinking?
- (E) Have you ever had a drink first thing in the morning to steady your nerves or to get rid of a hangover (**EYE OPENER**)?

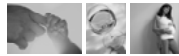
Screening Tools for Alcohol Use



T-ACE: Pregnant women

- (T) **TOLERANCE**, how many drinks does it take to make you feel high?
- (A) Have people **ANNOYED** you by criticizing your drinking?
- (C) Have you ever felt you ought to **CUT DOWN** on your drinking?
- (E) **EYE OPENER**, Have you ever had a drink first thing in the morning to steady your nerves or get rid of a hangover?

Screening Tools for Alcohol Use



T-ACE Scoring

- (T) 2+ drinks = 2 points
- (A) YES = 1 point
- (C) YES = 1 point
- (E) YES = 1 point

Two points or higher is a positive screen

Screening Tools for Alcohol Use



TWEAK: Pregnant women

- (T) **TOLERANCE**, How many drinks can you hold?
- (W) **WORRY**, Have close friends or relatives worried or complained about your drinking in the past year?
- (E) **EYE OPENER**, Do you sometimes take a drink in the morning when you get up?
- (A) **AMNESIA**, Has a friend or family member ever told you about things you said or did while you were drinking that you could not remember?
- (K) **CUT DOWN**, Do you sometimes feel the need to cut down on your drinking?

Screening Tools for Alcohol Use



TWEAK Scoring

- (T) 3+ drinks = 2 points
- (W) YES = 2 points
- (E) YES = 1 points
- (A) YES = 1 points
- (K) YES = 1 points

Three points or higher is a positive screen

Role of Social Worker



Social workers in healthcare and community settings can:

- Educate/Train
- Aid families and parents
- Display nonjudgmental attitudes
- Facilitate support groups

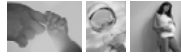
Role of Social workers



Social workers in the church can:

- Establish support groups
- Offer support
- Create partnerships with church and substance abuse programs
- Educate congregation
- Advocate for FASD families

Available resources



- FASD Center for Excellence
www.fascenter.samhsa.gov
- National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information
www.ncadi.samhsa.gov
- National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome
www.nofas.org
