

Seminar to debunk myths on alcohol and pregnancy

Monday, 19 May 2014

A seminar to inform stakeholders and the media about the prevention of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) will be hosted tomorrow Tuesday, 20 May by the Menzies School of Health Research.

FASD encompasses a range of life long conditions that are caused by alcohol exposure during pregnancy. Some of these include: brain damage, birth defects, vision impairment, difficulty hearing, social and behavioral problems and, language and speech deficits.

Director of Research and Knowledge Translation for the British Columbia Centre of Excellence for Women's Health in Vancouver, Nancy Poole will present on the disorder including a discussion outlining the evidence for prevention.

Ms Poole said it was important to have conversations about alcohol as there are many misconceptions around FASD and the safety of consuming alcohol during pregnancy.

"Our message is simple; there is no known safe time or safe amount of alcohol consumption while pregnant or breastfeeding," she said.

"Abstaining from alcohol should not be the sole responsibility of the mother. Women who are in a supportive environment where there is limited exposure to alcohol are better placed to avoid alcohol consumption."

The seminar falls after recent formation of a Select Committee by the NT Legislative Assembly to look into the prevalence of FASD, the effects it has on its sufferers, and what actions the Government can take to help prevent it.

"Hosting these discussions is about ensuring Government, health care professionals, media and the public are on the same page when discussing the risks," Ms Poole said.

Founder of the Russell Family Fetal Alcohol Disorders Association (RFFADA), Anne Russell will present on her experience as the mother of two children with FASD and the reasons why she came to establish the RFFADA.

To conclude a question and answer panel will offer the audience an opportunity to participate in the discussion. Panel members include Nancy Poole, Anne Russell, Dr Keith Edwards (Community paediatrician), Nikki Petrou (Lawyer, Top End Women's Legal Service) with Heather D'Antoine (Associate Director, Aboriginal Programs, Menzies School of Health Research) as chair.

Interested parties are invited to attend the event and learn about what can be done to prevent FASD in the NT.

What: Conversations about alcohol and pregnancy

When: Tuesday, 20 May 2014 from 1.00 pm

Where: Charles Darwin University, Casuarina Campus, Building Red 9, Room 1.48.

Please RSVP to lucy.barnard@menzies.edu.au or 0439 393 900

Media note:

Nancy Poole works with the British Columbia Centre of Excellence for Women's Health and with BC Women's Hospital on knowledge translation, network development, and research related to improving policy and service provision for girls and women with substance use problems and related health concerns.

She has co-edited two books, both published by the CAMH, including the recent *Becoming Trauma Informed*. She is the lead for the Network Action Team on FASD Prevention from a Women's Health Determinants Perspective for the Canada FASD Research Network.

Poole is well known for her collaborative work on FASD-related research, training and policy initiatives with governments and organizations on local, provincial, national and international levels.

Heather D'Antoine is the Division leader of Education and Capacity Building and the Associate Director of Aboriginal Programs at the Menzies School of Health Research.

Over the last 12 years Heather has worked in child health research. She has clinical qualifications in general nursing and midwifery and academic qualifications in health economics.

Heather's work describes what health professionals and women know and do about alcohol, pregnancy and FASD. She has been involved with developing and evaluating resources for health professionals and developing a model of care for FASD.

To view her profile visit:

http://www.menzies.edu.au/page/Our_People/Researchers/Heather_DAntoine/

Media contact:

Lucy Barnard, Senior Media and Events Officer 08 8922 8438
communications@menzies.edu.au

Menzies Background

Menzies School of Health Research is Australia's only Medical Research Institute dedicated to improving Indigenous health and wellbeing. We have a 28-year history of scientific discovery and public health achievement. Menzies works at the frontline, partnering with over 60 Indigenous communities across Northern and Central Australia. We collaborate to create resources, grow local skills and find enduring solutions to problems that matter.