

Alcohol, Pregnancy and its Effects: A Community Conversation

Thursday, 7 July 2016

Researchers from Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies) and WA's Telethon Kids Institute want to hear from member of the community about what they think are important issues in preventing and addressing Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).

On Monday, 11 July 2016, Menzies and Telethon Kids Institute will host *A Community Conversation – Alcohol and Pregnancy* to give community members the opportunity to discuss the effects of drinking alcohol during pregnancy and to raise awareness about the effects of FASD and the best strategies for supporting children with FASD.

FASD occurs when a mother drinks alcohol during pregnancy and can result in a range of birth defects including brain abnormalities that can affect memory, hearing and language skills. FASD can lead to problems with learning, behaviour and social functioning, which can lead to secondary disabilities such as poor school performance, mental ill-health and justice system engagement.

"Australia has some of the highest rates of FASD in the world, and this has an impact on many sectors including the health, justice and education," explains Ms Heather D'Antoine, Associate Director, Aboriginal Programs at Menzies and Investigator for the Centre of Research Excellence for Reducing the Effects of Antenatal Alcohol on Child Health (REAACH).

"For women who are pregnant or planning to get pregnant, the best way to prevent FASD is to not drink alcohol at all.

"No amount of alcohol can be considered safe during pregnancy, but if a woman has already consumed alcohol during her pregnancy, stopping alcohol consumption can reduce the effects of alcohol exposure in pregnancy."

Both Menzies and Telethon Kids are part of the REAACH Centre for Research Excellence that has been established to bring leading researchers together with the Australian community to provide a united approach to research on FASD and translating that research into improvements in prevention, diagnosis and management.

"Children with FASD require multiple management strategies that need to be individualised and provided early to reduce adverse secondary outcomes, so we're inviting parents, carers and relatives of children with FASD, as well as concerned teachers and members of the public, to come to the community conversation event on Monday," Ms D'Antoine said.

The Community Conversation event is being held at the Michael Long Learning & Leadership Centre at TIO Stadium (Darwin) at 6pm on Monday, 11 July.

For more information on the event, or to register, please visit the website: <http://bit.ly/alcohol-and-pregnancyNT>.

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Menzies School of Health Research

Menzies School of Health Research is Australia's leading medical research institute dedicated to improving Indigenous, global and tropical health. We have a 30-year history of scientific discovery and public health achievement. Menzies works at the frontline, joining with partners across the Asia-Pacific as well as Indigenous communities across northern and central Australia. We collaborate to create new knowledge, grow local skills and find enduring solutions to problems that matter.

Telethon Kids Institute

The Telethon Kids Institute is one of the largest, and most successful medical research institutes in Australia, comprising a dedicated and diverse team of more than 500 staff and students. We've created a bold blueprint that brings together community, researchers, practitioners, policy makers and funders, who share our vision to improve the health and wellbeing of children through excellence in research. The Institute is headed by leading paediatrician and infectious diseases expert Professor Jonathan Carapetis, with Founding Director Professor Fiona Stanley now Patron.