



The Politics of Women and Alcohol Messaging and Alcohol Policy without Fetal Alcohol Policy

**First International Conference on
Prevention of FASD**

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Canadian FASD

Prevention positives

- *Canada's Low-risk drinking guidelines Zero is safest*
- *Alcohol use and pregnancy consensus clinical guidelines SOGC*
- *Screening, brief intervention and referral CFPC*
- *Alberta FASD-CMC Strategic & Operational Plan 2013-14 includes awareness & prevention*
- *Saskatchewan Government provides additional funding for FASD awareness & prevention Feb. 2013*
- *Atlantic Intergovernmental FASD Partnership*
- *Girls, Women, Alcohol and Pregnancy*
<http://fasdprevention.wordpress.com>



FASD Prevention 2013

- Alcohol is a teratogen
- Women are drinking almost as much as men
- Risky drinking is up in young women & those 25-34
- Marketing targets women with sleek and subtle ads
- Provinces are liberalizing their liquor control laws
- 50% of pregnancies are unplanned
- Need for a variety of knowledge transfer efforts, activities, training with 4 level respectful messaging re women's drinking's risks for pregnancy & FASD



Alcohol policy without FASD

- *Ontario Alcohol Policy Framework*. CAMH April 2013
- *"Issues too complex to include here" – National Alcohol Strategy Recommendations April 2007*
- *National Alcohol Strategy*. Canada 2013?
- *Alberta: Policy approaches to address alcohol-related harm in Alberta* 2012 APCCP
- *Reducing alcohol-related harms & costs in BC*. 2013
- Liquor Policy Review in B.C.: will FASD-related policies be part of the discussion? Sept. 17, 2013



Alcohol-related harms without FASD

- *Alcohol no Ordinary Commodity* book & annual Ontario Public Health & CAMH forums
- CMAJ article *Alcohol in Canada: reducing the toll through interventions and public health policies.*
- *Strategies to reduce alcohol-related harms and costs in Canada: a comparison of provincial policies.* CAMH
- *Making the case: tools for supporting local alcohol policy in Ontario.* CAMH & Public Health Ontario
- *Women & alcohol* Ann Dowsett Johnston. article & National Round Table, Canadian Women's Health Network, *Drink: the intimate relationship between woman and alcohol*



Good alcohol policy (strategy) helps FASD

- SBIR (screening, brief intervention & referral), prices and taxes, restrictions on outlet density & time of sale, government monopoly, age restrictions, curtailing marketing to youth, sobriety checks, graduated licensing
- learn from tobacco – reducing supply and demand would reduce alcohol-related harm including FASD
- need to work with other ministries, such as Finance
- Manitoba's new alcohol strategy...everything “from binge drinking to health issues like FASD” Sept. 2013



The disconnect

- Alcohol policy: from chronic disease, for health of individuals, evidence-based in science
- Fetal alcohol policy: part of social-determinants of health, for women's/child health, may be overstated
- Uncertainty about messages re light drinking, ARND
- FASD's name leads to stigma, guilt and shame
- Physician discomfort, unprepared to discuss alcohol use with women
- Extensive multidisciplinary resources needed



Warning labels including pregnancy?

- 2013 Talk of need for warning labels for serving size, ingredients (gluten), health including cancer
- Only drinking & driving, the risks of underage drinking & chronic disease: CAMH report June 2013
- Latest country for labels including pregnancy: Turkey
- Canada Bills in the House of Commons: 1991, 2005, 2007, 2010 – FASD, drinking & driving and health
- Alcohol industry opposed to anything negative



Light drinking confusion

- Studies show no effects at age 3, 5, 7, 10: Australia, Denmark, U.K.
- Headlines : "Mothers-to-be can safely enjoy two drinks a week without harming their baby (and their child may be better behaved than if they abstained)"; "Mom's tipping with stop you toppling" re balance studies
- Rewriting the Rules of Pregnancy Women should make up their own minds based on the evidence - Emily Oster Aug. 2013
- "In reality there is absolutely no evidence that light drinking, even on a daily basis, leads to fetal alcohol syndrome..." David Hanson, NY
- Harvard Health: "Study: no connection between drinking early in pregnancy and birth problems" Sept. 10, 2013 Fergus McCarthy IRE
- Responses from NOFAS, doctors, researchers, CANFASD, parents
- "Many doctors, patients strongly disagree with U. of C. economist's finding"



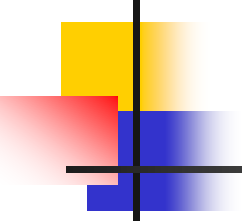
Missed opportunities - women & alcohol & pregnancy

- Special concern re bingeing
- Emphasis of messaging on danger of sexual assault, unwanted pregnancy, but no mention of FASD
- *Parent alcohol action pack* – no mention of sex
- Teaching students about alcohol & pregnancy
- Parenting, family support training could include FASD
- FASD training in addictions treatment



Working together for alcohol & FASD prevention

- Advocate for FASD in all alcohol policy and strategies – sensitize
- Participate in alcohol policy webinars, events – talk & question
- Use alcohol policy approaches in FASD work
- Advocate for women-focused community services
- Communicate: talk, webinars, articles, email, social media
- Strengthen the message: Write, publish, use the media
- Work with regional & national policy & research organizations
- Use a Canada-wide network of planners & service providers
- Use champions, new advocates, including family members
- Have a national discussion/debate on: a Canadian FASD federation, Canada-wide campaigns, activities for four levels



Canada: who are the players?

Where is the leadership?

- Need Canada-wide collaboration and action, knowledge transfer
- Where is the prevention funding and for what?
- National organizations: CANFASD, PHAC & Health Canada, Public Health, CCSA?, CAMH? ngos?
- Centres of Excellence for Women's Health
- Provincial governments & organizations?
- Medicine? – now get accreditation at FASD conferences
- Addictions?
- Advocates? Allies? Those living with FASD? need clear direction
- Friends on the National Alcohol Strategy Advisory Committee
- Learn from others – European FASD Alliance