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Researcher Credited With 1973 Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Discovery Says Alcohol Consumption During Pregnancy Still ‘Major Public Concern’ 40 Years Later

Aims To Raise Awareness During FASD Month With Launch Of Free Service For Pregnant Women

Brentwood, TN – It’s been 40 years since Kenneth Lyons Jones, MD, and David Smith, MD, first identified Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) after examining several children with similar traits who had all been born to chronic alcoholic mothers. Today, despite the well-documented spectrum of negative physical and mental effects alcohol can have on the developing fetus, Jones says it’s a “major public concern” that 1 in 13 women still drink alcohol during pregnancy, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“It’s deeply concerning,” said Jones, who is president of *MotherToBaby*, a service of the international non-profit Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS), and considered the world’s leading expert on FAS as well as other areas of birth defects research. According to Jones, the concern has become amplified as recent, misleading reports have hit the mainstream media that suggest light drinking during pregnancy is acceptable for all women. “Each woman metabolizes alcohol differently and 40 years of research overwhelmingly supports the conclusion that a ‘safe’ amount of alcohol that any individual woman can drink during pregnancy has simply not been established.”

Jones says as many as 1 in 100 babies are affected by prenatal alcohol exposure today which can result in a range of neurobehavioral disabilities, now known as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). The number of children diagnosed with FASD is almost as many as those diagnosed with autism.

Despite the statistics, Jones understands how many women can become frustrated with the laundry lists of “don’ts” thrown at them during pregnancy. “This is why it’s important that every woman takes the well-being of her pregnancy into her own hands by receiving a personalized risk assessment directly from an expert. This way she can make an informed decision about whether drinking alcohol or taking a specific medication, for example, is worth the risk during her particular pregnancy.” Jones and other members of OTIS aim to fill this role of providing reliable information to women and their health care providers with the launch of *MotherToBaby*.

MotherToBaby is a one-stop-shop for evidence-based free counseling available to women and the general public. All North Americans can be connected with *MotherToBaby* experts, like Jones, and receive individualized risk assessments regarding alcohol, medications and other

exposures during pregnancy and breastfeeding through the toll-free counseling service (866) 626-6847 or online at MotherToBaby.org.

Jones hopes the launch of *MotherToBaby* and September's International FASD Awareness Month will influence more people to spread the word about abstaining from alcohol during pregnancy. "The most important message is that FASD is 100% preventable."

Help spread the word about FASD by sharing the following PSA link:

<http://youtu.be/lq7HmV4jUl4>

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