

International Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Day 9 September 2019

The Foundation for Alcohol Related Research (FARR) is celebrating its 22th anniversary this year. Since the first Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) prevalence study in 1997, FARR has done 16 community prevalence studies in the Free State, Gauteng, Northern, Eastern and Western Cape Provinces, reporting rates ranging from 27/1000 (2,7%) to 282/1000 (28%). South Africa has the highest reported FASD rates in the world. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that the universal prevalence rate is approximately 1,5%.

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) is the most severe form of FASD.

On 9 September 2019, International FASD Day will be commemorated world wide. The first International FASD Day took place on 9 September 1999. Across the globe groups of people get together at 09h00 on 9 September to share a FASD prevention message. At 09h08 one minute silence is observed, with the participants reflecting on people who are living with FASD and their parents/caregivers. At 09h09 a bell is rung to ceremonially break the silence, thereby encouraging community members, family and friends to share the FASD prevention message and to support pregnant women to abstain from alcohol use during pregnancy. The number 9 is a reminder of the importance of 9 alcohol-free pregnancy months. The message for this year's International FASD Day is therefore: *"No amount of alcohol is safe during pregnancy."*

This year FARR will have a variety of International FASD Day events on all our project sites in the Free State, Western, Eastern and Northern Cape Provinces. Continuing to emphasize the number 9, sponsors, service providers, community members and clients are going to participate in awareness walks, ranging from 900 meters (to accommodate pregnant women) to 9 km in the various project areas; exhibitions; wire car competitions involving school children, parents, community members and service providers. FASD awareness knots will be distributed to be worn as a reminder of our joint responsibility to protect the unborn children in the community from the harmful effects of alcohol.

FASD is caused when an unborn baby (fetus) is exposed to alcohol. The teratogenic (toxic) effect of alcohol causes permanent, irreversible damage to the developing cells of the unborn baby. Since the baby's brain starts developing soon after conception, the brain of the fetus is especially vulnerable to the damaging effects of alcohol. For this reason, children with FASD, are born with permanent brain damage. It is however important to note that any other organ of the unborn baby can also be affected. Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) is the most severe form of FASD, but there are a variety of other conditions as well.

In South Africa approximately 78% of pregnancies are unplanned. As a result of this, women often do not realise that they are pregnant and therefore continue to use alcohol, especially during the first trimester (3 months of pregnancy). This is a very vulnerable time for the fetus as most of the organs develop during this period. Due to a variety of reasons, such as unplanned pregnancies, limited resources, attitudinal challenges and lack of knowledge, women often visit antenatal services very late during their pregnancies and therefore further delay the possibility of getting information about the dangers of substance abuse, FASD and the necessary support.

Due to the very high prevalence rates in South Africa, FASD is a public health concern in many communities, but unfortunately very little, if any, education is given to students in the health, education and social work sectors. To successfully prevent this condition, it is essential to raise awareness in the general public, but professionals should receive the necessary training and skills to do diagnose and manage FASD and to implement awareness and prevention strategies.

During recent years there has been an increase in international concern regarding the stigmatization of women of childbearing age and mothers of children with FASD. It is important to note that women often experience pressure from their partners, family and friends to use alcohol during pregnancy. Incorrect and misleading messages from health staff regarding the effect of prenatal alcohol use, cause confusion and often contradicts the important message that no amount of alcohol is safe during pregnancy. In FARR's studies in South Africa this was repeatedly found. Women also report that they often used alcohol as a form of self-medication to alleviate stress and to escape from daily hardships.

In the areas where FARR is operational, pregnant women are invited to enrol in Healthy Mother Healthy Baby© Programmes. These programmes are available to all pregnant women, irrespective whether they use alcohol or not. The aim of the programme is to provide pregnant women with information and the necessary skills to make informed decisions regarding their own health and the health of their unborn babies. The ultimate goal is to support them to have healthier pregnancies and healthier babies. Women who are using alcohol receive the necessary guidance and support in this regard. The programme is implemented with the support of the local Health Departments and is a huge success.

FARR also implements a variety of awareness programmes and offer Continued Professional Development accredited (CPD) training to educators, social workers, health professionals and students.

For more information about FASD, FARR's research, projects and/or the International FASD Day events in the above-mentioned provinces, please contact the FARR CEO at 021-6862646 or on 083 275 0202. Please visit the FARR web page www.farrsa.org.za or FARR's facebook.

Internasionale Fetale Alkohol Spektrum Afwysings (FASA) Dag 9 September 2019

Die Foundation for Alcohol Related Research (FARR of Stigting vir Alkoholverwante Navorsing) herdenk vanjaar sy 22ste bestaansjaar. Sedert die eerste Fetale Alkohol Spektrumafwyking (FASA) voorkomsstudie in 1997, het FARR reeds 16 gemeenskapsvoorkomstudies in Gauteng, Noord, Oos en Wes-Kaapprovinsies gedoen. Voorkomssyfers tussen 27/1000 (2,7%) tot 282/1000 (28%) is gerapporteer. Suid-Afrika het die hoogste gerapporteerde FASA voorkomssyfer in die wêreld. Die Wêreldgesondheidsorgaanisasie (WGO) skat dat die internasionale FASA voorkomssyfer ongeveer 1,5% is.

(Fetale Alkoholsindroom (FAS) is die ergste vorm van FASD. Aangesien die afkorting vir FAS in Engels en Afrikaans dieselfde is, gebruik Afrikaanssprekendes dikwels net die afkorting FAS wanneer na Internasionale FAS(A) Dag verwys word.)

Op 9 September 2019 sal Internasionale FAS Dag wêreldwyd herdenk word. Die eerste Internasionale FAS Dag het op 9 September 1999 plaasgevind. Regdeur die wêreld kom mense om 09h00 op 9 September byeen om 'n FAS voorkomingsboodskap te deel. Om 09h08 word 'n minuutlange stilte gehuldig, waartydens die teenwoordigers dink aan mense wat FAS het, asook hul versorgers. Teen 09h09 word 'n seremoniële klok gelui, hierdeur word die stilte verbreek en gemeenskapslede, familie en vriende word aangemoedig om die FAS voorkomingsboodskap te deel en swanger vroue te ondersteun om geen alkohol tydens swangerskap te drink nie. Die nommer 9 herinner ons aan die 9 alkoholvrye maande van swangerskap. Die boodskap vir hierdie jaar se Internasionale FAS Dag is dus: *"Geen hoeveelheid alkohol is veilig gedurende swangerskap nie."*

Hierdie jaar het FARR 'n verskeidenheid van Internasionale FAS Dag verrigtinge in al ons projekareas in die Vrystaat, Wes-, Oos- en Noord-Kaapprovinsies. Deur voort te gaan om die nommer 9 te beklemtoon, gaan borge, diensverskaffers, gemeenskapslede en kliënte deelneem aan bewusmakingstaptoegte wat wissel van 900 meter (om swanger vroue te akkommodeer) tot 9km

in die onderskeie projekareas; uitstallings; draadkar-kompetisies waarby skoolkinders en die meer.. FAS bewusmakingsknoppe sal versprei word en gedra word as 'n herinnering aan ons gesamentlike verantwoordelikheid om die ongebore kinders in die gemeenskap teen die skadelike gevolge van alkohol te beskerm.

FASA word veroorsaak wanneer 'n ongebore baba (fetus) aan alkohol blootgestel word. Die teratogeniese (toksiese/giftige) effek van veroorsaak permanente, onomkeerbare skade aan die selle van die ongebore baba. Aangesien die baba se brein kort na bevrugting begin ontwikkel is die brein veral baie blootgestel aan die skadelike effekte van alkohol. Kinders met FAS word dus met permanente breinskade gebore. Dit is egter belangrik om kennis te neem dat enige ander orgaan van die baba ook beskadig kan word. FAS is die ergste vorm van die wyer spektrum van stoornisse, naamlik Fetale Alkohol Spektrumafwykings (FASA), wat verskeie ander toestande insluit.

In Suid-Afrika is ongeveer 78% van swangerskappe onbepland. As gevolg hiervan besef vroue dikwels nie dat hulle swanger is nie en gaan niksvermoedend, veral tydens die eerste trimester (eerste 3 maande van swangerskap) voort om alkohol te gebruik. Dit is 'n baie kwesbare periode vir die fetus, want baie van die organe ontwikkel gedurende die tydperk. Vanweë verskeie redes, soos onbeplande swangerskappe, beperkte hulpbronne, houdingsprobleme en gebrek aan kennis, besoek vroue dikwels eers op 'n gevorderde stadium voorgeboorte dienste. Dit vertraag hul toegang tot inligting en ondersteuning ten opsigte van FAS nog meer.

Die hoë voorkomssyfers van FAS in Suid-Afrika dui daarop dat dit 'n openbare gesondheidsprobleem in baie gemeenskappe is. Ten spyte daarvan word baie min, indien enige, opleiding aan studente in gesondheidsorg, opvoeding en maatskaplike ontwikkeling gegee. Ten einde FAS te voorkom, is dit gebiedend noodsaaklik om die algemene publiek bewus te maak van die probleem, maar professionele diensverskaffers moet die nodige kennis en vaardigheidopleiding ontvang om FAS te kan diagnoseer, hanteer en om voorkomings- en bewusmakingsstrategieë te kan implementeer.

Gedurende die afgelope paar jaar was daar internasionaal 'n toename in die besorgdheid oor die stigmatisering van vroue in kinderbarende jare en moeders van kinders met FAS. Vroue ondervind dikwels druk van hul lewensmaats, familie en vriende om alkohol tydens swangerskap te gebruik. Verkeerde en misleidende boodskappe van gesondheidspersoneel rakende die nadelige effekte van voorgeboortelike alkohol gebruik veroorsaak verwarring en weerspreek dikwels die belangrike boodskap dat dit nie veilig is om alkohol tydens swangerskap te gebruik nie. In FARR se studies in Suid-Afrika was hierdie bevindinge herhaaldelik gerapporteer. Vroue noem verder dat hulle dikwels alkohol gebruik as 'n vorm van selfmedikasie om hul stres te help verlig en om te probeer ontsnap van alledaagse kwellinge.

In die areas waar FARR operasioneel is, word swanger vroue genooi om deel te neem aan die Gesonde Moeder Gesonde Baba© Programme. Hierdie programme is beskikbaar aan alle swanger vroue, ongeag of hul alkohol gebruik of nie. Die doel van die programme is om aan swanger vroue die nodige inligting en vaardighede te kan gee om hul in staat te stel om ingeligte besluite rakende hul eie gesondheid en die van hul ongebore babas te maak. Dit uiteindelijke doelwit is om hulle te ondersteun om gesonder swangerskappe en gesonder babas te hê. Vroue wat wel alkohol gebruik ontvang die nodige leiding en ondersteuning. Die program geniet die ondersteuning van die onderskeie plaaslike Departemente van Gesondheid en is baie suksesvol.

FARR bied ook 'n verskeidenheid van bewusmakingsprogramme aan en verskaf geakkrediteerde opleiding aan opvoeders, maatskaplike werkers, gesondheidspersoneel en studente.

Vir meer inligting oor FAS, FARR se navorsing, projekte en/of Internasionale FAS Dag verrigtinge in die bogenoemde provinsies, kontak asb die FARR Hoof-Uitvoerende Beampte by 021-6862646 of op 083 275 0202. Besoek gerus die FARR webblad www.farsa.org.za of FARR se facebook blad.

This message is shared in support of FARR and in the prevention of FASD



9 SEPTEMBER
International Fetal Alcohol
Spectrum Disorder (FASD)
Awareness Day

For more information
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