

'Every Moment Matters' in a climate for change in attitudes to alcohol use in pregnancy

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BACKGROUND

- Prenatal alcohol exposure (PAE) can harm the pregnancy and fetus and may cause Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).
- FASD affects ~2% children, with lifelong impacts.
- NHMRC recommends abstinence, but >60% Australian women drink alcohol in pregnancy.
- Women say they are not asked about alcohol by health professionals and get conflicting advice.
- The Australian Government funded the **Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE)** to lead Australia's first National Awareness Campaign for Pregnancy and Breastfeeding women called '**Every Moment Matters**' (2021-4).
- The campaign targets the general population, women in priority groups, and **health professionals**.

AIMS

To conduct a rapid review and interviews to

- identify *health professionals' knowledge, attitudes and practices* regarding identification of alcohol use in pregnancy, its harms and management
- inform development of *evidence-based messages* for the campaign.

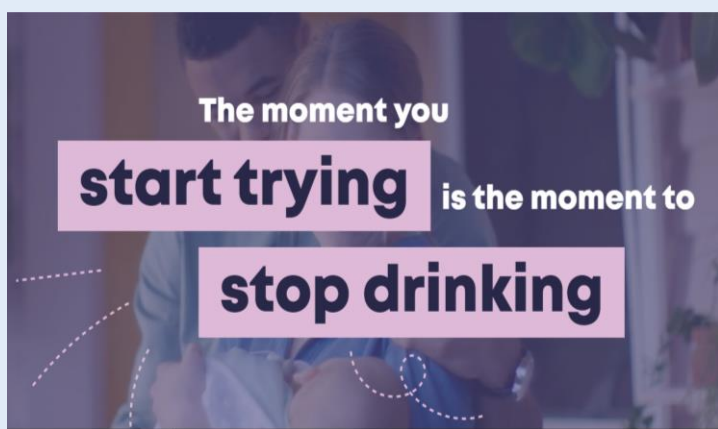
METHODS

1. Rapid literature review

- Search terms included FASD, alcohol and pregnancy, health professionals, attitudes, practice, knowledge.

2. Online in-depth Interviews

- Sample identified by an accredited recruiter.
- Clinicians included GPs (20), allied health profs.(10), nurses (6), some CALD and overseas-trained and some serving low SES and Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander populations.
- Interview used a "non-directive approach focusing on preventative health practice".
- Thematic content analysis of responses.



Every Moment Matters

www.everymomentmatters.org.au

RESULTS

1. Literature review

- 59 relevant articles were identified and rated on strength of evidence (peer-reviewed: systematic reviews, meta-analyses, original research).

2. Health professional interviews

Clinician knowledge, attitudes, and practice were consistent with literature review findings.

Clinician Knowledge

- Clinicians were unaware of NHMRC guidelines on alcohol use in pregnancy and breastfeeding.

Clinician Practice

- Clinicians did not routinely ask about alcohol,
- Did not advise on harms of alcohol to the fetus,
- Lacked confidence to screen, ask and advise.

Clinician Attitudes

- Clinicians assumed women had previously been informed about alcohol harms,
- Thought asking/advising about alcohol was irrelevant to their patient population,
- Feared initiating conversations about alcohol.

Barriers to evidence-based practice

- Clinicians cited lack of protocols,
- Lack of systems to embed evidenced practice,
- Lack of knowledge about treatment,
- Unclear referral pathways to services.

LIMITATIONS

- Results are limited by the paucity of primary evidence and relatively small clinician sample. Nevertheless, findings from the review and interviews were consistent & likely generalizable.

CONCLUSIONS

Effective health professional training is required to enable clinicians to:

- confidently initiate conversations with women about alcohol use in pregnancy and its harms;
- provide timely, accurate information based on research and consistent with NHMRC guidelines;
- understand their critical role in supporting women to make informed decisions for a healthy pregnancy

IMPLICATIONS These findings will be used to inform effective, clinician-focused messages for the **Every Moment Matters** campaign, which will assist clinicians to influence women's alcohol use behaviour and contribute to reducing alcohol-related harms in pregnancy including FASD.