

Challenges to screening for alcohol use during pregnancy

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Background - NZ

Leversha & Marks (1995) surveyed obstetricians, paediatricians & GPs about knowledge of FASD

- 89% of obstetricians and 84% of GPs felt sufficiently knowledgeable to inform women of risk
- 90% felt public awareness of risk was poor
- Of those who responded only 46% recommended abstinence
- Only 59% of obstetricians and 40% of GPs routinely enquired about alcohol consumption at the first antenatal contact

Alcohol Advisory Council Report (Mathew et al. 2001)

surveyed midwives about opinions and practice

- 98% reported they had heard of FAS
- 77% reported they had heard of alcohol related effects
- 65% would abstain if they were pregnant
- 32% would drink some during pregnancy
- Personal opinions toward alcohol consumption associated with their professional
 - Those who thought they would abstain more likely to recommend abstinence and vice versa
- *Most importantly over 90% wanted more education, information & training in recognizing the effects of alcohol*

Background - International

Australia – Payne et al (2005)

- Only 12% of health professionals could identify all 4 characteristics of FAS
- 95% had never diagnosed FAS
- 53% thought it might be stigmatising if diagnosed

US – O'Connor and Whaley (2005)

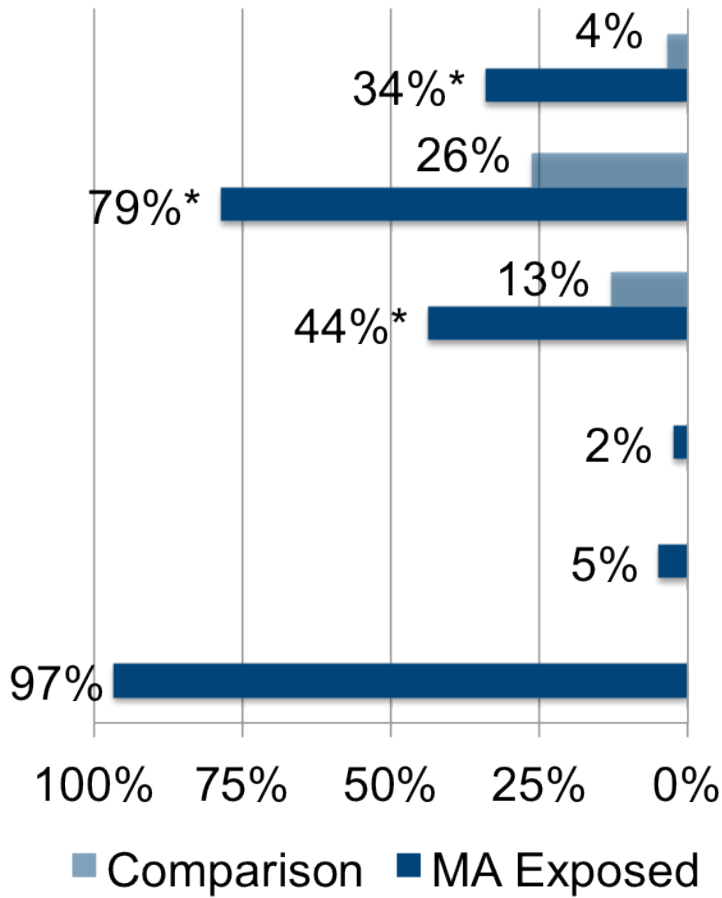
- Many women were counselled to stop drinking –no difference in consumption in those who were counselled and those who weren't
- 63% continuing to drink at levels assoc'd with potential harm to the fetus & high rate of depression reported (60%)

Evidence of alcohol use during pregnancy

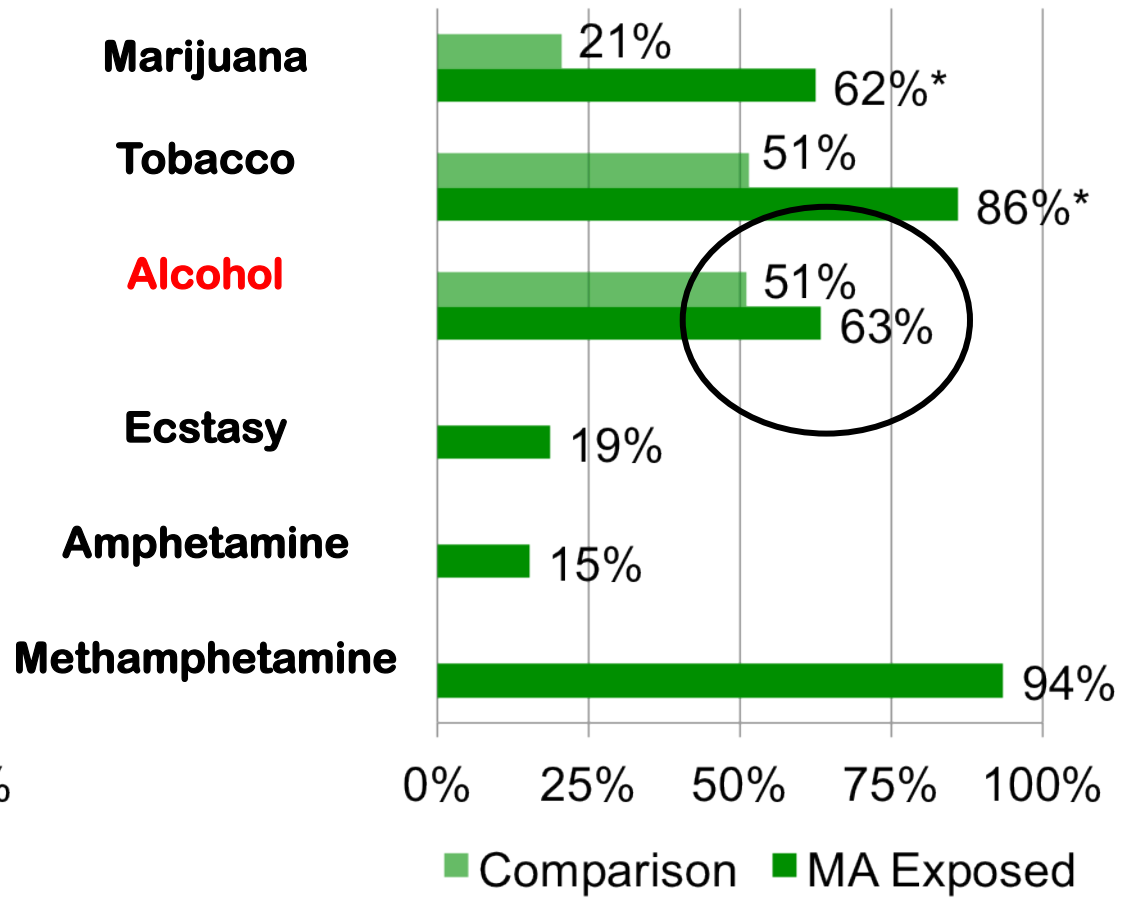
- Prevalence in NZ largely unknown
- Evidence comes from longitudinal studies:
- Growing Up NZ Study (2012) – over 7000 families surveyed
 - 30% no alcohol before pregnancy
 - 13% reported 4-20 drinks per week at some time during pregnancy
 - In 1st trimester more mothers with planned pregnancies stopped than unplanned 83% vs 69%

Percent of US and NZ Mothers who used Marijuana, Tobacco and Alcohol Prenatally (Substance Use Inventory).

US Study



NZ Study



Questions?

- Do NZ health professionals routinely ask about alcohol, tobacco and other illicit drug use?
 - When do they ask?
 - What are the barriers for screening for alcohol consumption?
- Are they using a standardized screener?
 - Which ones were they familiar with?
- If a mother reported continued use during pregnancy do they refer to counselling services?
- What do NZ health professionals know about FASD
 - Do they know the diagnostic criteria for FAS?

Research Design

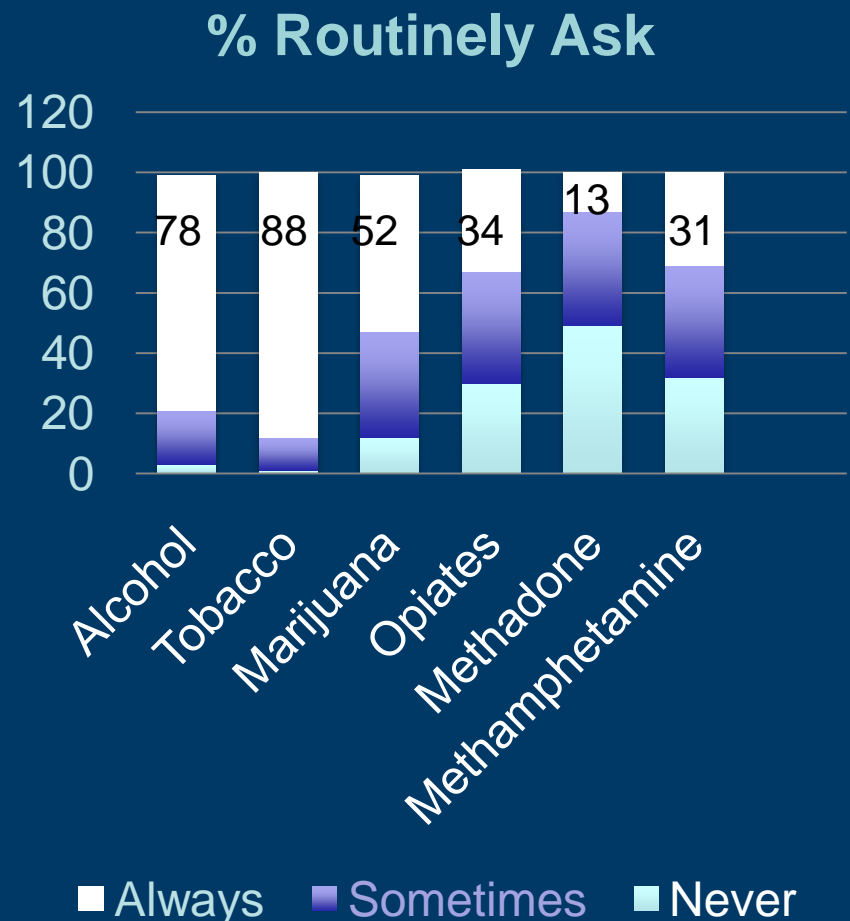
- Interviewed 241 Lead Maternity Carers (LMCs) and health professionals who treated women of child-bearing age in Urban (89%) and Rural (11%) settings
- 34% were Hospital midwives or nurses on the maternity ward
- 34% Midwives in Independent Midwife Practices
- 22% GPs or practice nurses
- Private/public consultants in Obstetrics (4%), Family Planning (3%) and Sexual Health (3%)

Characteristics of Participants

Characteristic	Percent (N)
Female	89 (215)
Currently consume alcohol	74 (176)
NZ European	66 (160)
Maori and Pacific Islands	8 (20)
European and UK	20 (46)
Asian	6 (15)
Urban—3 District Health Boards in Auckland	89 (215)
Rural—2 District Health Boards near Auckland	11 (26)
Mean (SD) pregnant women seen weekly	17.46 (16.68)
Mean years (SD) since clinical registration	18.24 (11.36)

Routinely ask about alcohol consumption

- 91% asked in 1st trimester, but often not 1st antenatal visit
- Barriers to asking included
 - 31% wouldn't ask at 1st meeting
 - 35% wouldn't ask if high SES
 - 38% wouldn't ask some ethnicities
 - 59% wouldn't ask if family present
 - 43% wouldn't ask if no established protocol

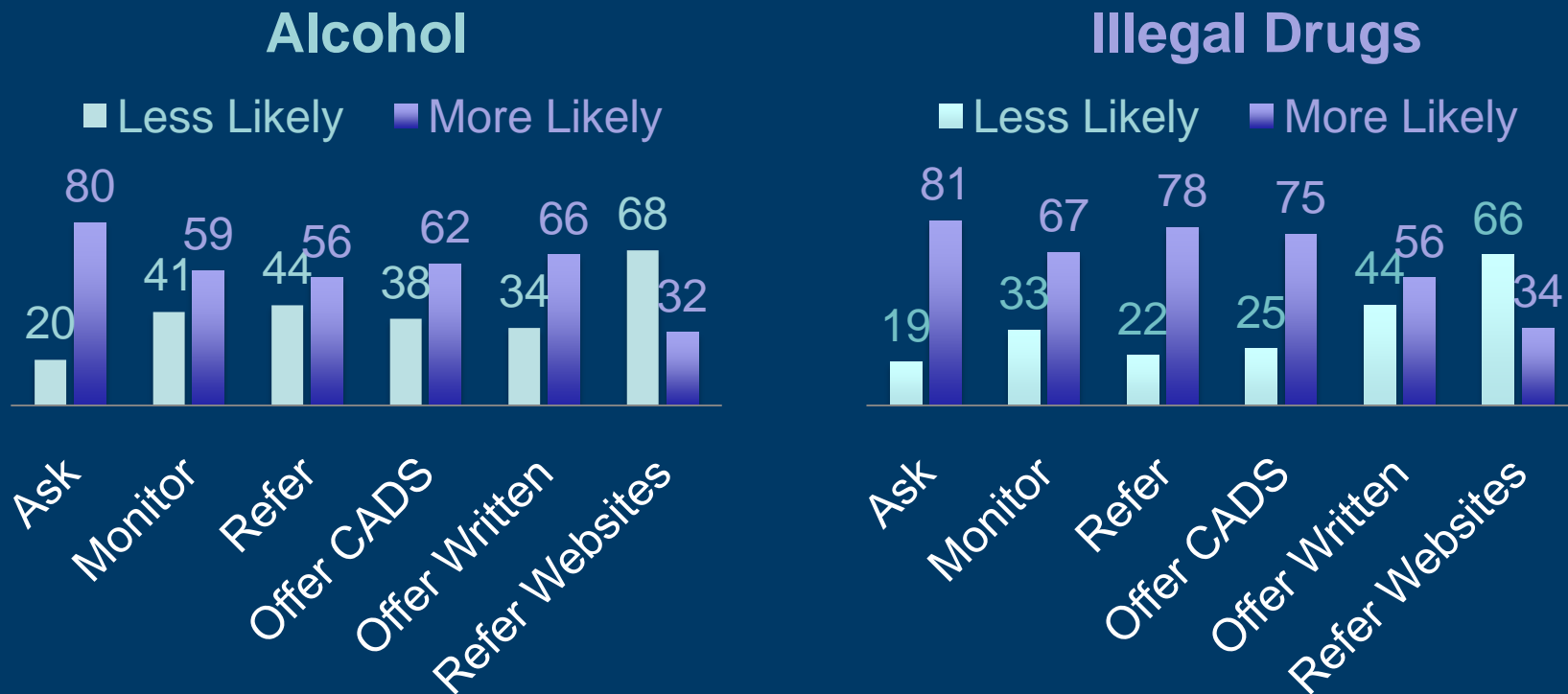


Knowledge of standardised screeners

Only 7% (16) reported using any of these standardised screeners

Screener	Use Now %(M)	Have Used %(M)	Know Of %(M)
T-ACE	1.2 (3)	0.4 (1)	5.4 (13)
TWEAK	0.4 (1)	0.8 (2)	5.0 (12)
MAST	0.4 (1)	1.7 (4)	4.6 (11)
S-MAST	0.0 (0)	0.8 (2)	3.3 (8)
CAGE	0.8 (2)	4.1 (10)	8.3 (20)
AUDIT	2.1 (5)	2.5 (6)	5.8 (14)
4Ps	0.4 (1)	0.8 (2)	8.3 (20)
5Ps	0.4 (1)	0.4 (1)	5.4 (1)
NET	0.8 (2)	0.4 (1)	2.1 (5)

If a patient reports they are using alcohol or drugs during their pregnancy how likely are you to do the following?



Significantly less likely to Refer or Offer Counselling for alcohol compared to illegal drugs

Knowledge of FASD

- Only 17% of Lead maternity carers (LMCs) used the term FASD or knew of the term
- Most associated the effects of alcohol with FAS
- Only 26% could identify all 4 criteria for FAS
- 52% thought Health Professionals were not sufficiently aware of effects of prenatal exposure to alcohol
- 65% though diagnosis of FASD stigmatizing

Discussion and Implications

- Need to improve screening for alcohol and other drug use in NZ – standardized screener that is mandatory
- Need to provide and update information for Health Professionals on latest evidence of effects of prenatal exposure
- Need clear pathways for referral or training for midwives to provide brief interventions during perinatal period
- Need to address attitude of health professionals around diagnosis as stigmatizing

Acknowledgements

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Whakatūpato Waipiro

<http://www.ahw.org.nz/page.php?p=172&fp=152>

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