

An action-research approach to prevent alcohol use during pregnancy in Italy

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Healthcare professionals have a key role in FASD prevention, by identifying pregnant women who consume alcohol and by giving information on the risks of this behaviour

In **Italy** the problem is poorly known and little dealt with in the professional work

Fiorentino D, et al. Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorders: experience on the field. The Lazio study preliminary report. Ann Ist Super Sanità, 42: 53-57, 2006

The Italian background

- ✓ A survey on Italian neonatologists revealed that about **half** of the respondents think that a pregnant woman can drink occasionally a glass of wine or beer

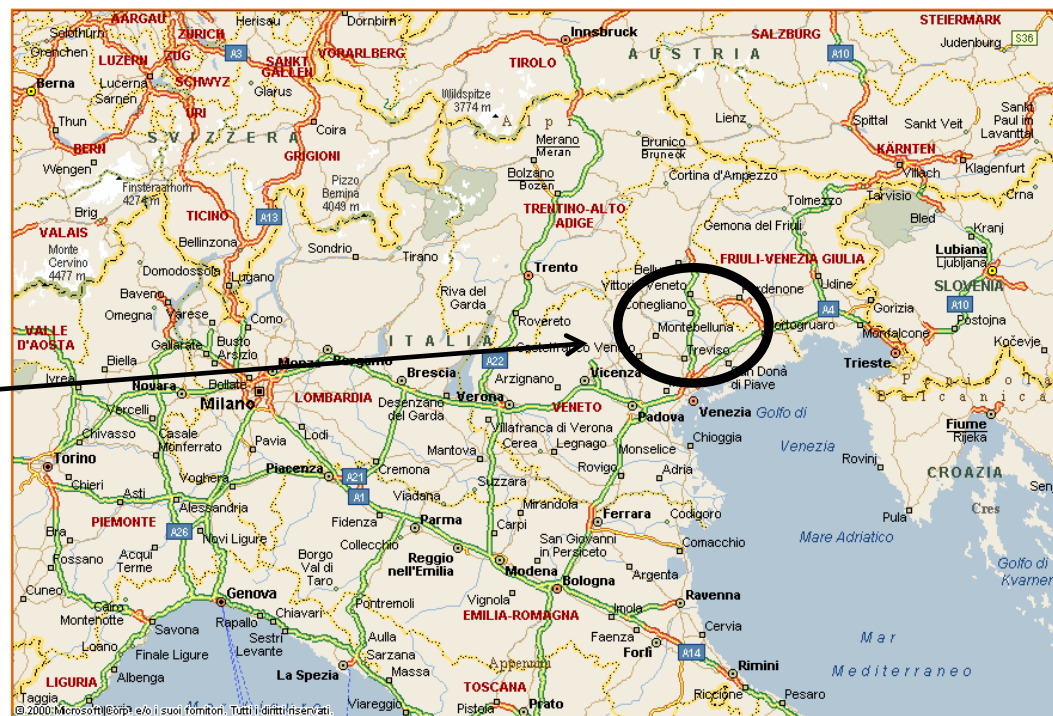
Vagnarelli F, et al. A survey of Italian and Spanish neonatologists and paediatricians regarding awareness of the diagnosis of FAS and FASD and maternal ethanol use during pregnancy. BMC Pediatr, 11, 51, 2011

- ✓ A study carried out in the city of Florence found that only **42%** of pregnant women receive information on the effects of prenatal exposure to alcohol and tobacco from general practitioners

Caruso JP et al. Indagine descrittiva sul consumo di tabacco e bevande alcoliche in gravidanza. Alcologia, 8, 8-12, 2010

The Local Health Authority of Treviso

Over 400 000 inhabitants



What do healthcare professionals know and do about FASD in the area of Treviso?



Prosecco hills around Treviso, Italy

The Mummy Drinks Baby Drinks project: a multilevel approach

Research



Communication

Professional training

Alcohol and pregnancy
in the Treviso area:
an action-research
approach for the
in-service training
of healthcare
professionals



“Action research is particularly suited to identifying problems in clinical practice and helping develop potential solutions in order to improve practice. For this reason, action research is increasingly being used in health related settings”

Meyer J. Using qualitative methods in health related action research BMJ. 2000. 15; 320(7228): 178–181

THE STAGES OF THE ACTION RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

1 - PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION (year 2008)

We investigated the background of knowledge, beliefs and attitudes on the issue among healthcare professionals working the field of maternal and child care

Qualitative approach

- ✓ Brainstorming
- ✓ Focus groups
- ✓ Individual interviews

with representatives of various professions and services
(n=39)

2 - SURVEYS (years 2009-2010)

Cambio MARCIA QUESTIONARIO
IN ATTIVITÀ CAMBIA

Il presente questionario è anonimo. Per una sua adeguata lettura abbiamo bisogno di conoscere alcune caratteristiche dei soggetti che ad esso risponderanno. L'anonimato, che potrebbe essere violato dalle informazioni che chiediamo in questo questionario, sarà garantito dalle modalità di elaborazione dei dati. La preghiamo cortesemente di rispondere a tutte le domande poste.

M F

Età: _____

Titolo di studio:

nessuno
 licenza elementare o media inferiore
 diploma di scuola superiore
 titolo universitario

Professione:

medico, specialità: ginecologa
 pediatrica
 altre (specificare) _____

ostetrico
 infermiere
 assistente sanitario
 operatore OSS - OSA
 altro (specif.) _____

Sede di lavoro:

ospedale: Treviso
 Odezza

territorio:

distretto 1
 area distrettuale
 distretto 2
 distretto 3
 distretto 4
 altro (specif.) _____

Antierosità di servizio:

Occupa l'attuale posizione (1) dal (anno): _____
Presta servizio nel settore (2) dal (anno): _____

(1) per attività ambulatoriale o ospedaliere (escluso il servizio di pronto soccorso)
(2) in un'attività ambulatoriale o ospedaliere (escluso il servizio di pronto soccorso)

Rapporto di lavoro con l'Az. ULSS 9:

sì no

Se sì, specificare:

dipendente: tempo indeterminato
 tempo determinato
 libero professionista in convenzione
 libera professione (non in convenzione)
 contratti di formazione (specializzanti ecc.)
 altro (specificare) _____

Grado di soddisfazione del proprio status economico:

per niente soddisfatto
 poco soddisfatto
 abbastanza soddisfatto
 molto soddisfatto

Self-administered questionnaires for health professionals working in the field of maternal and childcare

A series of items to investigate:

- ✓ Level of knowledge and opinions on alcohol consumption and other risk factors during pregnancy
- ✓ Perception of alcohol consumption among the general population and child-bearing aged population
- ✓ Professional attitudes with women regarding alcohol use

The target

- ✓ All the **health professionals** working in the maternal and child care services of the Local Health Unit
(gynaecologists, paediatricians, neonatologists, midwives, nurses, therapists, psychologists)
- ✓ All the **family physicians** and **paediatricians** working in the area of the Local Health Unit

3 – FROM RESEARCH TO TRAINING (year 2010)

- ✓ After completing the questionnaire, midwives and paediatric nurses asked to be trained on the issue
- ✓ A training course was designed and carried out
- ✓ The training was programmed with the midwives, taking into account knowledge, beliefs and needs highlighted by the results of the surveys
- ✓ The contents and the methodology of the training were based on the principles of andragogy and action-research
- ✓ **Active teaching methodology** (integration with circle time, movies, questionnaires, teaching cases, role playing and work in small groups)

Aims

- ✓ To raise awareness of the effects of prenatal alcohol exposure
- ✓ To acquire knowledge on the relationship between alcohol, pregnancy and lactation
- ✓ To improve interpersonal and communication skills with pregnant women and their family
- ✓ To promote the launch of "good practices", that could be shared in the professional experience, to recognize and inform child-bearing aged, pregnant, lactating women and their family

4 – EVALUATION OF EFFICACY (year 2011)

- ✓ To assess whether **there were changes in the professional approach to the patients**, an observational study before and after the training was carried out, involving a total of 459 pregnant women
- ✓ A self-reported questionnaire was filled in by all women in the final stages of pregnancy who had access to the birth locations of the Local Health Unit for the 38th gestation week visit. The first sample was the consecutive series of women who had the visit in a continuous 30-day period in 2010 (n=220). The second sample had the visit in a continuous 30-day period in 2011 (n=239)
- ✓ The kind and sources of information received by women were investigated (*outcome*)

RESULTS

The surveys

Overall, 437 professionals filled in the questionnaire:

- ✓ 302 health professionals working in the maternal and child care services of the Local Health Unit (79% of the entire population)
- ✓ 101 family physicians (37% of the entire population)
- ✓ 34 paediatricians (68% of the entire population)

Healthcare professionals working in pregnancy and infant care services of the local Health Unit

- ✓ Two thirds declared to know about the effects of prenatal exposure to alcohol
- ✓ 28% declared they have seen children with FASD in their professional experience
- ✓ 25% said that they think that a woman can drink daily at least half glass of alcoholic beverages during pregnancy
- ✓ 12% said that they advise to absolutely avoid drinking during pregnancy

General practitioners and paediatricians

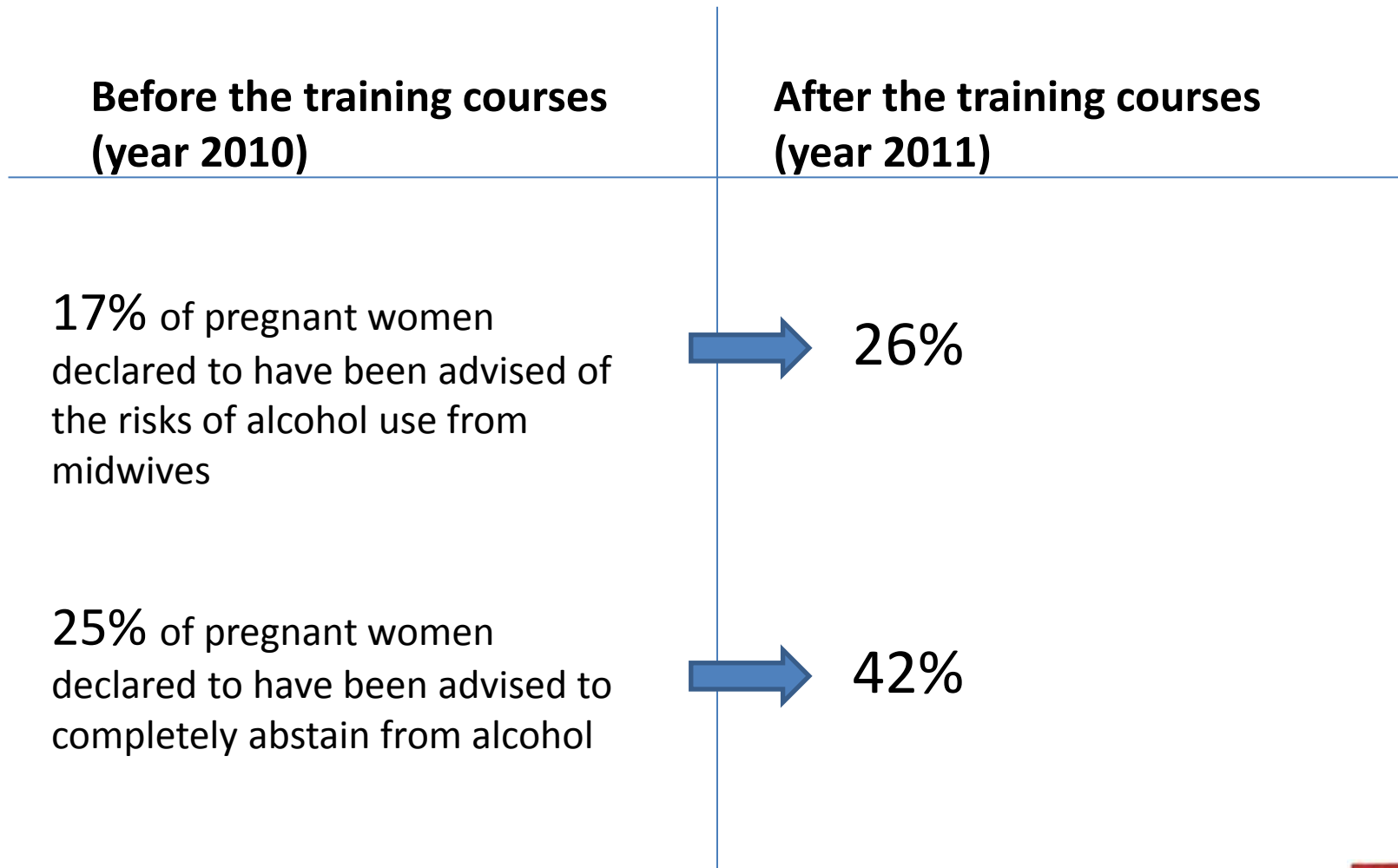
- ✓ Two thirds declared to know about the effects of prenatal exposure to alcohol
- ✓ 25% said that they saw individuals with FASD in their professional experience
- ✓ One third said that they think that harmful effects during pregnancy are dose related, and 25% said that a woman can drink alcohol daily during pregnancy
- ✓ 14% declared to recommend absolute avoidance of drinking during pregnancy

The training experience



- ✓ Mandatory training
- ✓ Target: midwives and pediatric nurses
- ✓ Four independent editions
- ✓ 180 participants

Efficacy of the training courses



- ✓ Women who filled in the questionnaire in 2011 had a significantly higher probability to declare to have been advised of the risks of alcohol from midwives (OR 1.349 IC 95% 1.011-1.800)
- ✓ Women who filled in the questionnaire in 2011 had a significantly higher probability to declare to have been advised of completely avoid alcohol during pregnancy (OR 1.517 IC 95% 1.182-1.947)

CONCLUSIONS

The action-research experience contributed to spread awareness and attention on the issue among midwives and nurses in the local health area

The training experience gave the health professionals the possibility to:

- ✓ explore the situations in which they work
- ✓ analyze their work
- ✓ introduce new experience and changes
- ✓ work critically
- ✓ achieve an irreplaceable educational activity

The action-research experience is still ongoing and led also to other initiatives, such as:

- ✓ a **collaboration protocol** among hospital and territorial health services for the identification and treatment of pregnant women who consume risky amounts of alcohol
- ✓ new national **guidelines** on alcohol and pregnancy for healthcare professionals
(Project Genitori Più – Veneto Region)

Thank you!

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