



Complex issues of alcohol and pregnancy




In this session, Dr Neil Aiton talked about some of the issues that make talking about alcohol in pregnancy such a hot topic.



These are some words we often hear when discussing alcohol in pregnancy.



freedom ethics
law human rights autonomy
rights attitudes
stigma choice support
responsibility
fetal rights culture future
documentation evidence



Different people think some of these are more important than others and that's okay.

Science, evidence and alcohol in pregnancy

People trust different sources of information.

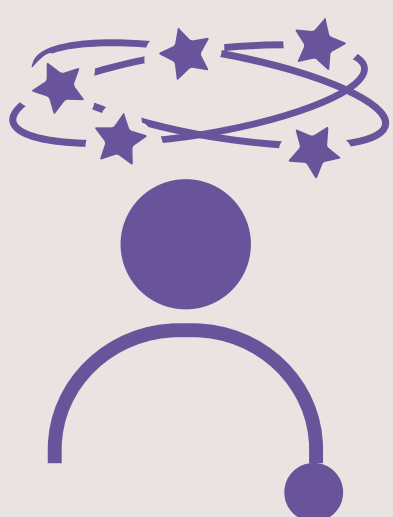
Scientific articles are hard to find and hard to read.

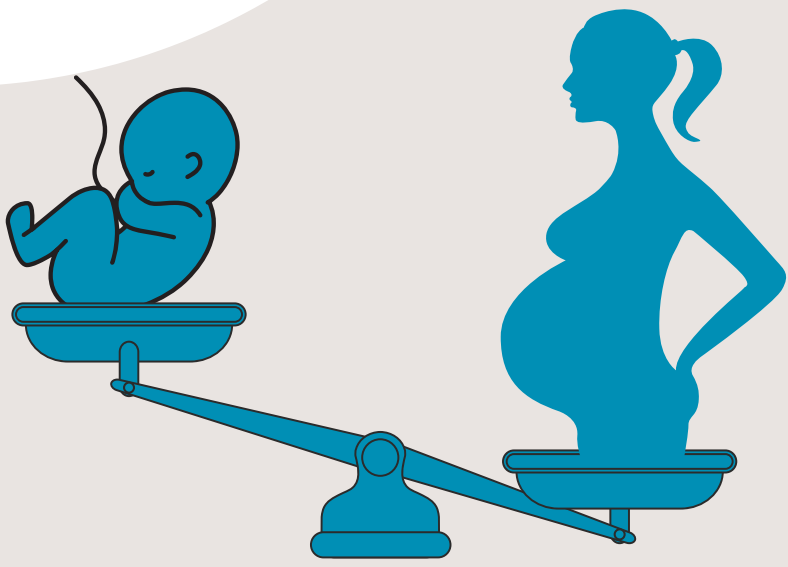
Often people hear about research from tv or social media and the information isn't always correct.

Sometimes, even if journalists get it right, their news companies change headlines, etc. to get more 'hits'.

Plus, scientists can't say yet how alcohol will affect a specific pregnancy because biology and other things affect each pregnancy differently.

No wonder people are still confused about the risks of alcohol in pregnancy!





Maternal and fetal rights

How do we balance the rights of the mother and the rights of the fetus? The law is different in different countries.

In UK law, the fetus doesn't have rights until the baby is born.

But it's complicated because ethically and morally some believe the fetus has more rights the further along the pregnancy progresses.

We don't want a situation where people stop coming forward for help with alcohol in pregnancy because they are afraid of being stigmatised or even punished.

FACT

NO ALCOHOL =
NO RISK OF FASD

While experts debate some details, they know for sure that alcohol exposure in pregnancy risks FASD.

Society

Our society needs a supportive approach to women who are pregnant and helps them, not one that punishes them for drinking alcohol.

We need to drive public health forward so we can reduce the number of children exposed to alcohol in pregnancy so we can reduce the number of people with FASD.

We can support women's rights but still encourage the best benefit for all.

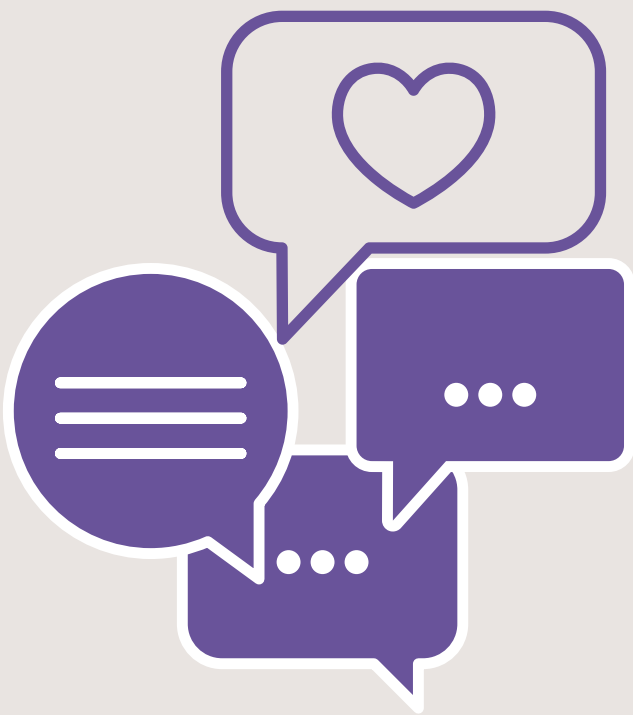
We can help drive positive change.

Other things to consider

We could do a lot better but it's not going to be entirely possible to prevent all children from being exposed to alcohol in the womb.



We need to be able to talk about this with understanding of each other's positions and without getting into shouting matches in social media and the media.



We've all got a part to play in talking about this and helping to drive forward policy change.



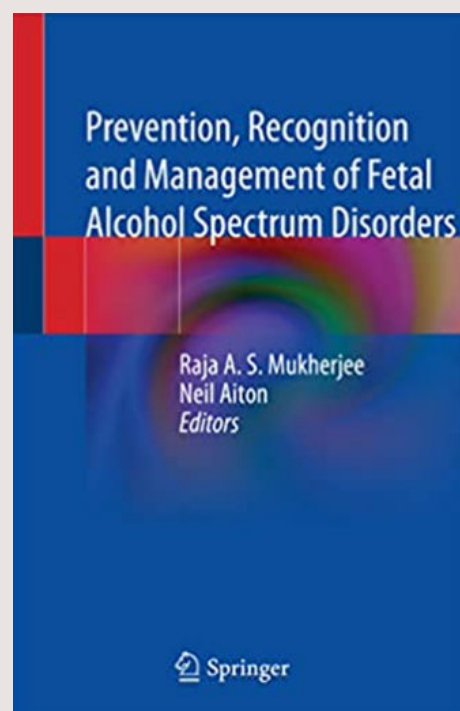
Neil said National FASD has played an important part in pushing for change.



He thinks the future is bright, but it will take time for the change we want to see to reduce the number of alcohol-exposed pregnancies.



What is Raja and Neil's FASD Book Club?



Prof Raja Mukherjee and Dr Neil Aiton wrote a book for other doctors about FASD. But they hope more people can access the information.



In this online book club people who wrote chapters give 15-minute talks about what they wrote and then they answer questions.



After each book club, the talks are shared on National FASD's YouTube channel.



You don't have to read the book. It's expensive because it's for libraries and universities. But if you want to order it, it's here:

<https://tinyurl.com/RajaAndNeilFASDBook>