



Flash Report
Work meeting
Towards joint activity to address alcohol related foetal damage
Brussels, 8 December 2011

An informal work meeting in Brussels on 8th December 2011 brought together public health community members to explore possibilities to seek synergies through joint or mutually supporting work to address alcohol related foetal damage. The participants represented the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA), the Standing Committee of European Doctors, the European FASD Alliance (EUFASD), the European Social Insurance Platform (ESIP), the Hellenic Medical Students and International Federation of Medical Students Associations (IFMSA), the Royal College of Physicians (RCP), the European Midwives Association (EMA) and Eurocare. The meeting was chaired by Despina Spanou, Principal Adviser and Chair of the European Health and Alcohol Forum.

Purpose of the meeting

The prevention of damage to the unborn child from exposure to alcohol during pregnancy is an important area of action, including for the organisations participating in the work meeting, but where yet more could be achieved. With this in mind, the purpose of the meeting was to discuss ideas for the participants' respective spheres of activity, and for exploring possible synergies to widen reach and, in effect, impact across the EU.

Participants discussed the factual basis for Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). Opportunities for making accessible information on activities and good practices through the Health-EU Portal could be looked at as well as opportunities to support FASD-related research including to develop evidence-

based interventions for prevention, diagnosis and management.

Participants were informed about the 2nd European Conference on FASD which will be organised by EUFASD and partners in Barcelona on 21-24 October 2012.

Main topics discussed

A wide range of challenges and opportunities were touched upon in the subsequent discussion. Identified feasible opportunities for action in the short or medium term included: development of a basic information document that could be translated especially to fill in information gaps (EUFASD); development of a tool kit for EU wide distribution to physicians (CPME); collection and distribution of good practices in midwifery, including pre- and post-natal care (EMA); sharing of experiences of a three-pronged prevention project carried out in France at local level, involving contacts with key medical professionals as well as web-based information and workshops for pregnant women (CNAMTS/ESIP); identifying opportunities for co-operation with the pharmaceutical industry for targeting information to women of child-bearing age (Eurocare); capitalising on the potential of medical students to act as ambassadors to inform, raise awareness and mobilise local communities (IFMSA).

Options for long-term action identified included: ensuring that information for the prevention and management of FSD is included in medical curricula and in the requirements for medical and other appropriate professions; and setting up expert groups to develop European guidelines on alcohol consumption during

pregnancy and for the management of at-risk or affected patients.

Conclusions

The informal work meeting to exchange views around FASD was an achievement in itself. Activities focussed on FASD should be set in the wider context of preventing harm from alcohol consumption during pregnancy. Further work is needed in the form of awareness-raising, education and counselling. Opportunities beyond the participants' sphere of activity were identified, such as wider use by alcohol producers of product labelling, a role for

retailers and use of other means to inform consumers, and wider sharing of Member States' experiences of mandatory health warnings and national information campaigns. It was also noted that there is a compelling need for comparable data across the EU on the prevalence of FASD to enable further awareness-raising, targeted measures and mobilisation of wider support and coalitions.

Participants agreed to explore synergies and possible joint work and exchange of good practices.