The Social, Psychological, and Physical Repercussions of Alcohol Dependency:
Addicted Mothers and their Children

This is aimed at attacking alcoholism and the many social and health related problems that arise from alcohol addiction through Facebook and other online sources.

Tag Words: Alcoholism, alcohol dependency, addiction, pregnancy, pregnant women, Facebook, FASD, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, AA, and Alcohol Anonymous

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Intro:
Addiction is recognized as a disease by the medical community and alcoholism, also known as alcohol dependence, is one of the most common recognized addictions in the world. We approached this issue hoping to engage our target group, alcoholic pregnant women or mothers. However, the Facebook group that we created is open to all alcoholics and we didn’t feel it was right to exclude anyone seeking help with their addiction. We chose to try a Facebook group because it was easily accessible and it could get publicity quickly. However, we also decided to try to start our own website or blog to allow people to talk about their addictions or alcohol dependence with others and use the links available to access correct information about addiction, alcoholism, and Alcohol Anonymous. We used Alcohol Anonymous’ ideologies, such as the 12-Step Program, in some of our project to provide a stable system to help people who accessed Facebook or the blog.
The Issue: Alcoholism

The disease.
Alcoholic addictions do occur over time due to repeated use. However, what people do not understand is the psychological affects and genetic predispositions some people have to addiction. This project is also aimed at clarifying that alcoholism is an addiction; addiction is a disease, not a reflection of insufficient will power.
Alcohol related incidents are not always reflected in mortality or crime rates. Approximately fifty percent of violent crimes, suicides, and accidents, such as motor vehicle or domestic, are alcohol related. Socially, drinking even in excess is far more accepted than abusing illegal drugs or obesity. Excessive drinking is often portrayed comically or nonchalantly in the media. Commercials for alcohol or shows reflecting college life emphasize how natural underage and binge drinking is and how ‘everyone does it.’ For the sake of sales, alcohol is advertised almost everywhere. Contrasting, when people get addicted, the repercussions are not so highly advertised.

Alcoholism and Pregnancy (MS, JK, HP)
* Alcohol affects an infant whether it’s a zygote or a newborn baby.
Alcohol is a big issue today when it comes to infants. Even though people say that it’s ok to have a little drink for a pregnant women, IT IS NOT!! It is clear that whatever we eat and drink goes through the blood stream to the placenta to the baby, which means that alcohol consumption will be delivered to the baby if you happen to drink. Due to the Amniotic fluid the alcohol stays in the womb longer causing more damage to the fetus. Nine out of the Thousand are born with alcohol exposure and negative side effects that coincide with this. Alcohol can affect the fetus in different developmental stages called trimesters. Alcohol consumption in each trimester is dangerous in its own way. During each of the three trimesters a fetus experiences vital stages that exposure to alcohol can stunt or disrupt.

Stages of Pregnancy
Trimester 1(MS)
   Trimester 1 is one to three months of pregnancy, where the baby is starting to develop.
   Various critical systems and organs are developed. It is the critical stage where the baby is most vulnerable. Alcohol consumption during the first trimester is dangerous because there is higher chances of the fetus being aborted, it can also cause abnormal facial features. If in pregnancy there is heavy alcohol consumption there will be dramatic increase in the risks of complications. Not just heavy but even light drinking may have a dramatic effect on the fetus.

Trimester 2(HP)
   Trimester 2 is four to six months of pregnancy where the baby starts developing bones, facial expressions, and the baby’s sex will become apparent by week fourteen, it can hear, and fat accumulating. Alcohol consumption during this stage can result in short stature, mental defects, weight loss. Heavy Alcohol consumption may have a dramatic effect. It is said that little alcohol consumption during this stage of trimester could not have a huge impact but little is still a lot.

Trimester 3(JK)
Trimester 3 is seven to nine months where the baby develops its final and most pivotal functions in brain and nervous system. During this stage there is high risk of miscarriage or premature birth. If the mother has been drinking excessively during the first and second trimester, the likelihood of miscarriage will increase. There is also a higher chance of the baby being born with behavioral or anger problems, learning disabilities, mental retardation, or attention deficit and hyper activity.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders- FASD (HP, MS, JK)
The following symptoms or defects can occur from alcohol consumption during pregnancy.

- Small body size and weight
- Slower than normal development and failure to catch up
- Curved spine and hip dislocations
- Small head
- Small eye openings
- Opening in roof of mouth
- Small brain
- Mental retardation- occasionally severe
- Learning disabilities
- Short attention span
- Poor body, hand , and finger coordination
- Genital malfunctions
- Kidney and urinary defects
- Poor memory
- Sleep and sucking problems
- Problems with heart, kidneys, and bones

Bottom Line (JK, HP, MS)
Each pregnancy is different and some mothers drink excessively without their babies being born with defects. However, some mothers drink small amounts of alcohol and the fetus shows signs of alcohol damage. It’s best not to drink at all during any of the trimesters. Not just during the pregnancy but also after the baby is born there should be no alcohol consumption due to breast feeding. The child can consume alcohol through breast milk.

Current Methods of Dealing with Addiction
Currently, many agencies approach addiction not just from one perspective. In fact, therapy often consists of several methods that deal with the psychological, physical, and environmental aspects of the person’s addiction. Alcoholism is difficult to overcome if the person goes right out of rehab to an environment where everyone drinks on a daily basis.

Usually alcoholism, like other addictions, is derived from underlying issues. Unless the issues are resolved, the person may end up replacing alcohol dependency with another addiction. Support during rehabilitation is important in order to maintain sobriety. Stress, boredom, and other psychological triggers can send people to relapse. In order to fight these, support needs to be more readily available.

Service Project: Reaching the Target Group: Pregnant Women and Women with families
The target population is a very important and often misunderstood group of individuals. Women who drink while they’re pregnant are often looked down upon because most people know the many complications that can occur during a pregnancy without the consumption of alcohol. Addiction is more than a craving. It is crippling. People who use don’t know how to function without using and withdrawal (and alcoholics do go through a painful withdrawal) can be a truly
harrowing experience. Addiction pulls addicts to do anything to get their high, even at the risk negative consequences that they’ve seen and done before.  

Although it is understood that these are symptoms of addiction, society cannot forget those connected to addicts. The most closely connected and most at risk are the children of addicts. This said, the highest priority group of individuals that need diagnosis, rehabilitation and treatment are pregnant women or mothers. However, many mothers, especially single mothers have little time to stop and go to rehab for several weeks. Many hide their addictions due to lack of social understanding. Without easily accessible facilities that can cater to this high priority group, many children remain at risk of being born with FASD or growing up in an unstable environment.

The use of online interfaces was a feasible solution to the accessibility problem. Alcohol Anonymous has its own online groups for alcoholics; however, they do not offer a group for pregnant women due to an assumption that many women would not join and that those who did would be highly criticized for their drinking habits. The Facebook group was started and the links to online sources for recovery and help with alcohol addiction were posted there for easy access.

From the Facebook website, we searched the word “group.” At the top of the results was an option to make a new group. We clicked on it and went about filling in information. We had to make sure the group was semi private in order to secure that only those who joined could see the information within the group. The links and posts were added and advertising was as easy as inviting friends online or waiting until someone came across our group in a search.

Complications

There are several things to keep in mind when starting a group or blog that deals with addiction issues. We attempted but failed at obtaining someone with addiction experience or counseling experience to help monitor the website. The problem with creating a group like this is that there are ethical responsibilities that often conflict someone from helping part-time. People with addiction issues could need help at any time. Facebook is open all the time. Perhaps limiting the hours would schedule specific meeting times for all members and make managing group members easier.

Creating a blog through the use of blog websites assist in the transition. Although this was a late adjustment, we believe it may have promising results. Blog sites are usually built so that those blogging can use aliases or pen names and they are easy to access or stumble upon when searching the internet. Combining or jumping on a blog site that has other alcohol related materials might help in attracting people from our target group.

Overcoming addiction is an ongoing ordeal. An addict can relapse at any point even after being clean for several months or several years. A group such as this would need ongoing monitoring. Our plan was to start the group and hope that the members could maintain and foster its growth once the group was stable. However, the group is still small and needs more time to grow. It is also believed that some people just use the links to access the other sources we posted on the website. If all else fails, at least we pointed people in the right direction.

References

http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fasd/index.html
http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fasd/alcohol-use.html
http://www.amazingpregnancy.com/pregnancy-articles/651.html
Letters to the Editor:

Many of those who need support or addiction therapy often meet barriers, such as time constraints or lack of nearby facilities. Many online support groups have formed to help those suffering from depression or addiction get the help they need by talking to mentors or others with the same affliction, such as how Alcohol Anonymous brings alcoholics together to help battle addiction. It allows alcoholics to form a group.

Although Alcohol Anonymous has online group therapy, we created a group on Facebook that allows alcoholics to discuss addiction. The group is aimed at targeting pregnant women and mothers because we believe that although this group may be stigmatized for drinking, they need to reach these services more than other groups of alcoholics. Alcohol Anonymous’ did not have an online group for pregnant women due to similar reasons.

The Facebook group is mainly to help those with alcohol related problems talk to others suffering with their addiction find support and companionship from others that can relate. If these programs can create such strong social bonds and is an outlet that people rely on, then perhaps they can contribute to alleviating other social problems that require healthy communication and support.

Online support groups have started to gain support as a convenient and effective means of bringing people together. Social Networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, have opened up new doors for companies and businesses who wish to advertise. It only seems logical that public health groups or health related services utilized these interfaces to expand their clientele and reach the people who need them.

Although this started out as a class project for our Ethics in Science class, the intention to help the community and fight alcohol addiction is an earnest one. Still, it is difficult to encourage people to join an online group as open as Facebook, even if privacy settings were applied to help secure anonymity of the members.

Alcohol Anonymous currently has an online chat for members who are too far away from centers or meeting sites or form those who wish to stay completely anonymous. They did say that they might adopt this group if it implements the 12-Step program and if its members agree to the transition. If Alcohol Anonymous overtakes the group it could better reach others through the use of Facebook and perhaps further the effectiveness and scope of its rehabilitation program.

This is not a letter simply to publicize this group, but moreover to help people realize that alcoholism is a present problem in our community and that many people are still unsure on how to approach addiction. We were when we started this project and we’re still learning that this is not a straightforward or easy task. Nevertheless, if we could build community support and understanding around this issue through small initiatives, perhaps together we can accomplish larger objectives at battling and preventing addiction.

Sincerely,

Jared
Hiral Patel  
Julie Fagan  
Rutgers University

Alcohol anonymous and buddy system

Have you ever wonder what alcohol consumption can do to your health and others? Focusing on the idea of pregnant women and their babies’ health, Dr. Julie Fagan and with two other students I have talked to alcohol anonymous to create a buddy system to help prevent alcohol consumption for pregnant women.

There are so many people out there who are unaware of the consequences of alcohol consumption, especially to their infants. The alcohol consumption can lead to so many diseases such as Down syndrome, fetal alcohol syndrome and other mutations. Just to help those infants to prevent all the diseases we are here to help them through the buddy system.

What is buddy system? Buddy system is where a person can go talk to their buddy online when they feel like consuming alcohol, this way their buddies can help them talk out of drinking or consuming alcohol. It is a very helpful system where people could be talked out and helped easily by others. Alcohol anonymous is willing to help us with this, so all the people out there worried about their unborn child’s health and need to help prevent this come join us on Facebook.

To help people who are in need of help, here we bring a Face-book group called Alcohol Anonymous. This group is open for people in need for help with their health and their infant’s health. This is a closed group, which makes it only available for people in a serious need of help. We will try to help them in any and ever manner we can. If need help and want to join us search for ALCOHOL ANONYMOUS on Facebook group or shoot us and Email on alcohol.anonymous@yahoo.com. You may contact us for any kind of help needed, and we promise you to help you in any and every manner we can.

Sincerely,
Hiral Patel

Maitri Shah

Alcoholism and Pregnant Women

Have you ever wondered to what can excess alcohol consumption do to you and to others related to you? Females, have you wondered what would happen if you drink alcohol to you externally and internally? To answer these questions, I, Maitri Shah, with two other Rutgers University students, Jared Khan and Hiral Patel, and under the supervision of Dr. Julie Fagan, a professor at Rutgers University decided to play an active role to help those who are already in this mess. My group is working in collaboration with Alcohol Anonymous – a buddy system that helps an addict relieve his or her addiction to alcohol (in our case, target is women). My group is in the process of Alcohol Anonymous group start a group on web – facebook, MySpace, twitter, or even starts their own website so that those who are shy of talking about their problems in public can form a buddy system online and still seek help.
We have created the facebook group – alcohol anonymous that is completely private. It is just like talking to your buddy in person because the members and your buddies can only view the conversations that are conducted. It is just like talking to a buddy face to face whenever you need help. The facebook help system is a good way for a help seeker and the helper to meet and talk frequently and share the problems. Thus this can prove to be the convenient way to a good deed for a good cause.

People who drink have adverse effects on themselves. Especially females between the ages of 21 and 35 who are planning to have family, consuming alcohol is appalling to them and to their fetus. Also, females who are pregnant should not consume alcohol. It is because if the mother drinks alcohol, the child is eventually going to consume via mother. Thus the child can acquire deadly disease just because of the addiction. So, seek help and get free from alcohol addiction. The contact information is alcohol.annoymous@yahoo.com or join us on facebook (just search alcohol anonymous and join).

Sincerely,

Maitri Shah