**KNOWLEDGE AND ADVICE OF NORTHERN ONTARIO MEDICAL SCHOOL STUDENTS ON THE SUBJECT OF FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER**

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Objectives:Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is an umbrella term describing the range of effects of prenatal exposure to alcohol, and is currently the leading non-genetic cause of intellectual disability in the western world. However, diagnosis is often delayed or not considered due to its complex nature and early diagnosis is one of the strongest protective factors against adverse life outcomes in individuals with FASD. Healthcare practitioners, who play a crucial role in prevention and diagnosis, report feeling underprepared for caring for individuals with FASD as well as pregnant individuals using alcohol. Limited research regarding healthcare practitioners and FASD has been conducted in Ontario, and even less so in Northern Ontario; therefore, this study aims to investigate the knowledge that future healthcare practitioners gain during their time at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM) in regards to FASD, as well as the advice they would give to women regarding the use of alcohol during pregnancy.

Method: The proposed comparative, cross-sectional study has a sequential, explanatory mixed methods design. The first phase consists of two questionnaires: (1) The Healthcare Student Questionnaire, regarding general knowledge about disabilities and demographic information, and (2) the FASD Survey for Healthcare Students, which consists of questions more specific to FASD itself. All students who complete the first phase will be invited to the second phase, which will consist of interviews and vignettes regarding the advice that students would give to individuals with FASD and pregnant individuals using alcohol. Data collection for the first cohort was completed in 2015, and the second cohort will be collected in 2017.

Results: this study is ongoing. Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis will be used to investigate quantitative and qualitative data, respectively. Although the main objective of the study is to explore the knowledge and advice of NOSM students in regards to FASD, the study will also investigate sub-questions involving gender differences, differences between cohorts (especially in assessing the implementation of the 2016 guidelines within the medical curricula), differences between perceived knowledge and actual knowledge of students, the accuracy of student advice, the accuracy of this knowledge, the sources of this knowledge (including the influence of past experiences), and how prepared students report feeling to care for individuals with FASD and/or pregnant women who may be using alcohol.

Discussion/Conclusions: Although data collection has not been completed, this research hopes to identify common misconceptions, gaps in knowledge and barriers to learning for medical students. These results will ideally help to inform future curriculum changes at NOSM. This study aims to be a piece of the literature that is currently working towards a strong, cohesive message from healthcare professionals regarding alcohol use during pregnancy, as well as improved support for both pregnant individuals using alcohol and individuals with FASD.