Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

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Implications for Nursing...

- The advanced practice nurse will not avoid the detrimental effects of FASD in clinical practice.

- Knowledge and compassion will be vital to the successful intervention, helping the client to have an optimal quality of life.

- Prevention and awareness are the ideal focus. Women of child-bearing age must be educated on the detrimental effects of alcohol on the embryo/fetus. There is no known safe level of alcohol during pregnancy.

- Early detection and intervention are the key to helping the individual with FASD to achieve optimal quality of life.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)

- The fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) is the most involved in FASD. Fetal deaths may occur from drinking alcohol during pregnancy. People with FAS may have altered facial features, growth problems, and central nervous system (CNS) problems. People with FAS can have problems with hearing, memory, attention span, communication, vision, or hearing. They might have a mix of these problems. People with FAS often have a hard time in school and struggle to have a good relationship with others.

- Alcohol-related Neurodevelopmental Disorder (ARND): Individuals with ARND might have intellectual disabilities and challenges with behavior and learning. They might perform poorly in school and have difficulties with work, memory, attention, judgment, and poor impulse control (CDC, 2019).

- Alcohol-Related Birth Defects (ARBD): People with ARBD might have problems with the heart, kidneys, or brain or with hearing. They might have a mix of these (CDC, 2019).

- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a spectrum of conditions related to fetal alcohol exposure. It can be mild to severe, and the severity depends on the amount and timing of alcohol consumption during pregnancy. FASD can cause problems with the heart, kidneys, or brain, and it can affect a person’s social and emotional development.

- Characteristics of FASD include:
  - Mild to severe intellectual and developmental disabilities (IQ)
  - Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
  - Poor social understanding and planning
  - Poor coordination and planning
  - Poor muscle tone
  - Visual working memory deficits
  - Receptive language deficits
  - Executive functioning (but not in organizing and planning)

- Schematic representation of the presented results in a paper from the journal Pharmacogenetics: Related changes can affect gene expression and drug response.

- According to the Centers for Disease Control (2019), 40% of all women drink alcohol regularly in the past 30 days.

- About one third of women who reported consuming alcohol during pregnancy had binge drinking episodes (4 or more servings of alcohol).

- Recent evidence indicates an epigenetic mechanism (after stimulus) for children prenatally exposed to alcohol.

- Prevention and awareness are the ideal focus. Women of child-bearing age must be educated on the detrimental effects of alcohol on the embryo/fetus. There is no known safe level of alcohol during pregnancy.

- Early detection and intervention are the key to helping the individual with FASD to achieve optimal quality of life.

- Knowledge is key!

Future research...

- Researchers, in order to improve the spectrum of conditions related to fetal alcohol exposure, need to focus on the following areas:
  - Altered regulation of gene expression–reduced excitotoxic cell death/survival.
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- Protective therapies