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ALCOHOL DEPENDANCY DURING PREGNANCY

INTERNATIONAL FOETAL ALCOHOL AWARENESS DAY 09 SEPTEMBER

On the 9th September, to symbolise the nine months of pregnancy communities around the world hold events to raise the awareness of Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD).

Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder can be caused if a woman drinks alcohol during pregnancy. FASD is an umbrella term that covers foetal alcohol syndrome (FAS), alcohol-related neurodevelopment disorders (ARND), alcohol-related birth defects (ARBD), foetal alcohol effects (FAE) and partial foetal alcohol syndrome (pFAS).

When a pregnant woman drinks, the alcohol in her blood passes freely through the placenta into the developing baby's blood. Because the foetus does not have a fully developed liver, it cannot filter out the toxins from the alcohol as an adult can. Instead, the alcohol circulates in the baby's blood system and can destroy brain cells and damage the nervous system.

Effects can be mild or severe, ranging from reduced intellectual ability and attention deficit disorder to heart problems and even death. Many children experience serious behavioural and social difficulties that last a life time.

The incidence of FASD in the UK and internationally is not accurately known. Many children born with FASD are not diagnosed, or do not receive a correct diagnosis, which makes calculating the prevalence of the condition extremely difficult.

Alastair Mordey, the Programme director at The Cabin, an addiction treatment centre located in Chiang Mai, Thailand is concerned about the number of women struggling with alcohol intake prior to conception and during pregnancy, he says, "Because there is no proven safe level for alcohol consumption during pregnancy, the only risk-free approach is to avoid alcohol completely – during pregnancy, when trying to conceive and when breastfeeding."

UK addiction expert Sarah Graham added, "Sometimes women don't realise they are alcohol dependent until they start trying for a baby- or fall pregnant. No woman wants to harm her unborn child and I strongly recommend seeking urgent treatment. Alcoholism is a brain based illness and detox needs careful medical



management; to stay sober through those difficult first months requires expert support and guidance”

Notes to Editors

- Alastair Mordey (BA hons, RDAP, ADAP) is the Programme Director at The Cabin Chiang Mai, an addiction treatment centre based in Chiang Mai, Thailand. He is a certified and accredited addiction counsellor with over 10 years’ experience working in treatment services.
- Sarah Graham is a member of the UK Gov’s Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) and is a leading authority on substance misuse by children and young adults and is an expert commentator for FRANK. She is also a NADA qualified auricular acupuncturist and trained in intervention with two of the world’s most renowned interventionists – Ken Seeley and John Southworth. Her specialist area is stimulant drugs and she also sits on the ACPO Meth and Precursors Working Group.
- The Cabin Chiang Mai is Asia’s most respected Drug and Alcohol treatment centre. Established in 2009, with two facilities and a secondary treatment Sober House located in Chiang Mai, The Cabin has treated over 300 men and women from around the world with a programme completion rate of 96% and a recovery rate amongst the highest in the world.
- The unique programme at The Cabin combines CBT, the 12 Steps, Mind Mapping, Mindfulness therapy and physical exercise therapy.

To discuss this story or to interview Sarah Graham please contact Teresa Quinlan on 0203 551 3970 or email teresa@loveprlondon.com