

AOGS

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Press release

Smoking, tobacco exposure and pregnancy, a serious issue.

The effects of tobacco on pregnant women, both directly and through so-called secondhand smoking, when others around the pregnant mother smoke, is the subject of the April issue of this leading Nordic and international journal (see www.informahealthcare.com/aogs, 2010, issue 4), not least with reference to what is happening in middle- and low-income countries around the world. Following an international call for articles on this theme last year in the wake of an expert meeting organized by the U.S. Center for Diseases Control and Prevention and the U.S. National Cancer Institute, a series of over 20 scientific contributions, spearheaded by a Guest editorial from the new head of WHO in Europe, Dr. Zuzsanna Jakab, is being launched to cover this important issue. Dr. Jakab highlights that smoking is a leading cause of poor pregnancy outcome and prenatal death and linked to several health problems that seriously affect reproduction. While smoking is declining among women in some high income countries it is increasing in low and middle income countries and transnational tobacco companies have switched to heavily promote 'western' brands of cigarettes. Even in wealthier countries, those who smoke through pregnancy are likely to be among the socially disadvantaged - young, single, of low income and educational attainment. Male smoking rates are also still high in far too many countries, which exposes women and children at home and in public places.

How can smoking in pregnancy be reduced? How can we prevent women from starting again to smoke after pregnancy? Policy makers must act decisively to halt and reverse an increase in smoking among young people, particularly girls, in order to prepare for the future. The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control is important for this and a sustained effort to minimize the adverse effects of tobacco exposures, which threaten to undermine recent improvements in maternal and child health, not least in middle- and low-income countries. This is highlighted in this issue of AOGS, - the first to be dedicated to this topic in the global literature and with a global public health and policy perspective. There are reports on interventions to promote tobacco cessation and reduce secondhand smoking exposure during pregnancy in high-, low-, and middle-income countries, on non-cigarette tobacco use by women and on social and cultural factors influencing pregnant women's use of tobacco and exposure to secondhand smoke. There is a call to action for funding support, scientific inquiry, and evidence-based interventions to prevent and reduce tobacco exposure among pregnant women. The ongoing epidemic which affects the most vulnerable part of populations, women and children, must be halted.

The issue is open access as regards all the articles.