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Indiana ranks seventh in the nation for tobacco use during pregnancy

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Indiana Perinatal Network produces training DVD to educate health care providers on proper screening and treatment for pregnant patients using harmful substances

INDIANAPOLIS – Indiana has a high incidence of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use by women who are pregnant, ranking as high as seventh in the nation of women who smoke during pregnancy. That means nearly 18,000 Hoosier babies every year are born to a mother who smokes, according to a recent report by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free KIDS.

A recent analysis conducted by the IU School of Medicine estimated that 10 percent of pregnant women drink alcohol and 5 percent use illegal drugs. That means nearly 9,000 Hoosier babies are affected by alcohol and 4,500 are affected by drugs each year.

The Indiana Perinatal Network (IPN) says the best way to reduce these figures and increase the chance for healthier Hoosier babies, is to educate health care providers about how to identify drug, alcohol and tobacco use during pregnancy, and also how to use a more supportive approach when talking to their patients about it.

In partnership with Indiana doctors, IPN developed a training DVD that provides the kind of tools health care providers say they need, so they and their staffs can be better prepared to treat pregnant women who use one or more of these harmful substances. It's the first training DVD of its kind, but already is getting positive reviews from doctors and other health care providers who have seen it.

The DVD features Dr. James Nocon, Director of the Prenatal Recovery Clinic at Wishard Memorial Hospital and Clinical Associate Professor at the IU School of Medicine, who offers suggestions on what health-care providers can do if they suspect a patient is using tobacco, abusing drugs or alcohol. He provides practical role-play scenarios with clinical and research-based material and interventions.

"Surprisingly, only five to 10 percent of pregnant women who use tobacco, drugs or drink alcohol are identified and receive the appropriate treatment for themselves and their unborn children," said Larry Humbert, Indiana Perinatal Network's executive director. "We have found that many physicians aren't educated in how to screen or treat patients or are comfortable to talk to their patients about their substance use."

"We all know that smoking, using illegal drugs and abusing alcohol are harmful to pregnant women and their unborn babies, but it's a very difficult and sensitive topic for doctors to approach with their patients," Dr. Nocon said. "If we can screen and intervene early in the pregnancy we can reverse many of the harmful effects of tobacco, cocaine and other harmful substances."

The DVD also includes resources for health care professionals, so they can help their patients get the treatment and help they need.

The DVD was produced in partnership with the IU School of Medicine, Indiana Section of American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Indiana Chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics, Indiana State Department of Health, Indianapolis Healthy Start and Indiana March of Dimes.

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For more information on the DVD or to order a copy, contact the Indiana Perinatal Network at 1.866.338.0825.

About IPN

The mission of the Indiana Perinatal Network (IPN) is to lead Indiana to improve the health of all mothers and babies. We provide resources for mothers and families, offer the latest information to healthcare providers, and promote sound public policies. We have a proven ability to bring together diverse disciplines and organizations to reach consensus on complex issues affecting the health of Indiana's mothers and babies.

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