

**Evaluating the risk factors associated with social care referral for babies of women who misuse alcohol or drugs**

Jessica Roy

- ACMD (2003) estimates that 16% of all children under the age of 16 live with someone who misuses drugs while 1.3 million children live with a parent who misuses alcohol.
- Research suggests that children who have parents who misuse substances are over represented in the Child Protection and care system ( Cleaver 1999, Kearney 2003, ADMD 2003)
- Referring unborn children to Children's Social Care
- Chronic neglect of substance misuse in the social work curriculum (Galvani & Hughes 2010, Kroll & Taylor 2004)
- Continuing academic and practice debates as to the unique risk of parental substance misuse vis a vis social deprivation.

## Rationale

- Children's Social Care referral: If an unborn child or child are referred to social care by a professional it demonstrates that there is concern that they are suffering, or likely to be suffering from significant harm.
- Substance misuse: The use of alcohol or illicit substances in a way that results in social, psychological, physiological and legal problems for the individual and those around them.
- Risk: Broad definition adopted from Munro (2008) that risk leads to 'unwanted outcomes' (2008: 59).

## Definitions

- Sample
  - Convenience sample of 85
  - Pregnant women who engaged in antenatal period with specialist drug and alcohol agency between Jan 2008-Jan 2010.
  - All consented to have information used in research
- Employed statistical analysis to demonstrate significant associations and predictive factors to Children's Social Care referral

## Methodology

basic demographics – employment - housing - previous children - placement of previous children – partner - partner using substances or not - domestic violence - criminal justice - family support - substances use - prescription. illicit use during pregnancy - illicit use at 32 weeks of pregnancy - social care referral - social care outcomes - FAS/NAS – birth weight - gestational age at presentation to services - Hepatitis C - mental health - physical health

## **Variables collected**

- 95% of cohort were White British
- 60% of cohort lived in rented accommodation
- 68% of cohort were unemployed
- 63% had previous children
- 55% referred to Children's Social Care
- 14 babies removed from birth mother/parents in the first three months of life

## Demographics

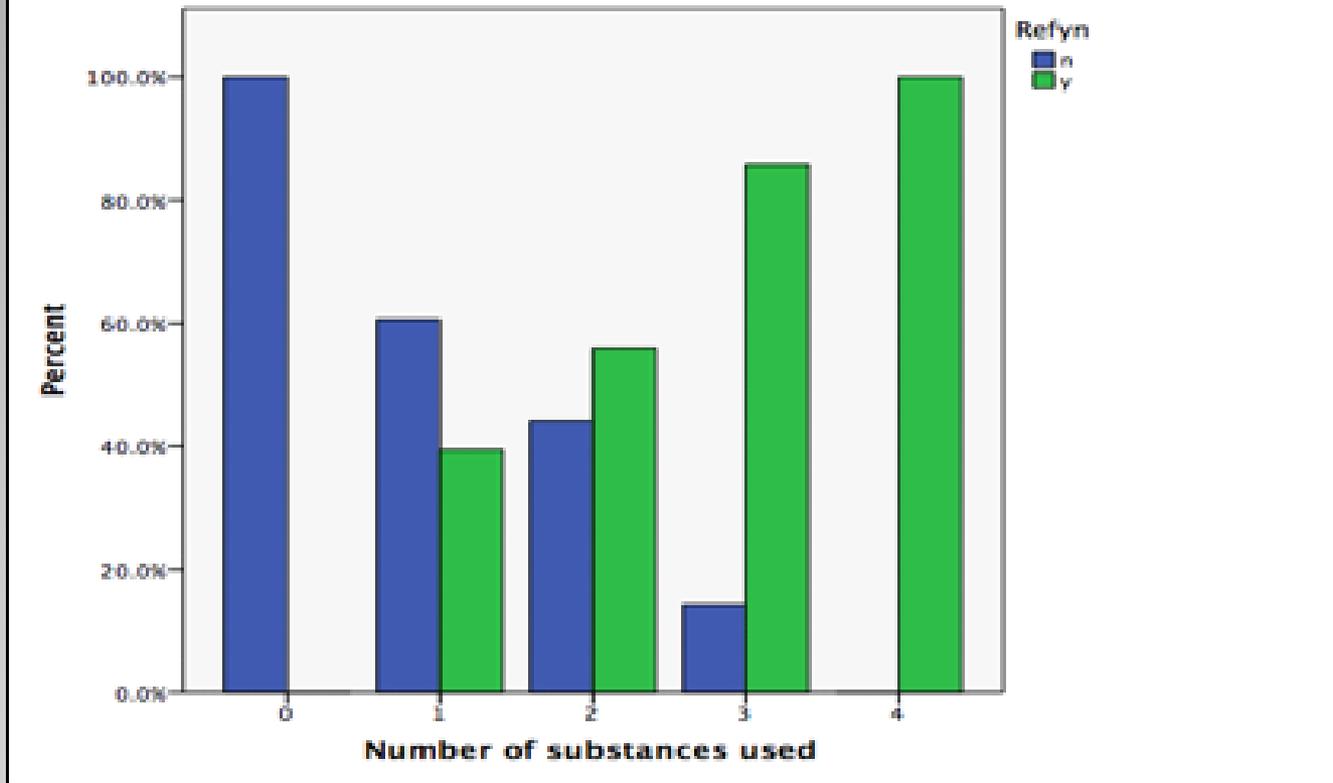
- Substance use
  - Primary substance of use in the cohort was heroin
- Substance misuse during pregnancy
  - 61% misused substances during pregnancy of whom 73% were referred to social care.
  - 73% of those who misused during pregnancy on prescription
- Logistic regression demonstrated that use of substances during pregnancy increased chances of being referred to social care by over 5 times than if there was no illicit use during pregnancy.  $P = 0.015$

## Substance misuse and social care referral

- Role of intervening variables
  - Cocaine use reported in 26% of the cohort and 66% of these used illicitly during pregnancy.
  - 73% of those who reported cocaine use were referred to social care
  - High rate of poly substance use: 20% reported as using 3 or 4 substances and 60% of the cohort used 2 or more.

**Cocaine and poly substance use**

Bar chart demonstrating number of substances used with social care referral



**Poly substance use**

- Family support was reported by 67% of the cohort
- The logistic regression demonstrated that in the observed data, not having family support increased the chances of being referred to social care by over three and a half times than if there was family support. ( $p = 0.028$ )
- Of cohort who reported family support, 46% were referred to Children's Social Care.

## Family Support and social care referral

- 82% of the cohort had a partner
- 60% who did not have a partner were referred to social care
- 62% of partners also misusing alcohol or drugs
- 87% of the cohort who illicitly used during pregnancy had partners who misused drugs or alcohol.
- 23% (n=16) of the cohort were documented as being in violent relationships. Only 10 of these were referred to social care

## **The role of the partner**

- Mean birthweight was 2797g with a Standard Deviation of 524g. This fell within the average range set by the city of 2700g.
- Gestational age at presentation was, on average, late at 16 weeks however this did not associate with poor foetal outcomes or referral to social care
- 35% of the cohort's baby's had FAS/NAS however this did not correlate with social care referral.
- Hepatitis C was documented in 17% of cohort and depression in 42%.

## **Foetal and Maternal health**

- High end social care outcomes characterised by following risk factors
  - 71% had criminal justice involvement
  - 67% reported domestic violence
  - 93% were poly substance users
  - 100% used illicitly during pregnancy

**Social Care Outcomes.**

- Predictive effect and association of illicit use in pregnancy over social care referral
  - Types and method of substance misuse
- Impact of socio-economic factors
  - Family support
  - Partner
  - Foetal outcomes

**Key findings**

# Concluding Remarks

- ACMD (2003) Hidden Harm: Responding to the Needs of Children of Problem Drug Users London: Advisory Council for the Misuse of Drugs
- Cleaver, H. Knell, L. Aldgate, J. (1999) Children's Needs, Parenting Capacity: The impact of parental mental health, problem alcohol and drug use on children's development London: Stationery Office
- Cleaver, H. Nicholson, D. Tarr, S. Cleaver, D. (2007) Child Protection, Domestic Violence and Parental Substance Misuse Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London
- Day, E. Porter, L. Clarke, A. Allen, D. Mosel, H. Capello, A. (2003) *Drug misuse in pregnancy: The impact of a specialist treatment service* Psychiatric Bulletin Vol. 27, pp. 99-101
- Department of Health (2006) Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children London: Department of Health
- Forbes, J. & Lyon, P. (2006) *Working with consumers: multi-professional care for substance-using pregnant women* in International Journal of Consumer Studies Vol. 30, No. 3, pp284-293
- Forrester, D. (2000) *Parental substances misuse and child protection in a British sample: A survey of children on the Child Protection Register in an inner London District Office* in Child Abuse Review Vol. 9, No. 4, pp.235-246
- Forrester, D. & Harwin, J. (2008) *Parental Substance Misuse and Child Welfare: Outcomes for Children Two Years after Referral* in British Journal of Social Work Vol. 38, pp.1518-153
- Forrester, D. & Harwin, J. (2006) *Parental substance misuse and child care social work: Findings from the final stage of a study of 100 families* in Child and Family Social Work Vol. 11, No. 4, pp.325-335

## References

- Galvani, S. & Hughes, N. (2010) *Working with alcohol and drug users: Exploring the knowledge and attitudes of social work students* in British Journal of Social Work Vol. 40, No. 3, pp. 946-962
- Gorin, S. (2004) *Understanding What Children Say: Children's experiences of domestic violence, parental substance misuse and parental health problems* London: National Children's Bureau
- Hayden, C. (2004) *Substance misuse and child care social work: Research in a city social work department in England* in Child Abuse Review Vol. 13, pp. 18-30
- Humphreys, C. Regan, L. River, D. Thiara, R. (2005) *Domestic violence and substance use: Tackling complexity* in British Journal of Social Work Vol. 35, pp. 1303-1326
- Kearney, P. Levin, E. Rosen, G. (2002) Alcohol, Drugs and Mental Health Problems London: National Institute for Social Work
- Kearney, P., Ibbetson, M., (1991) *Opiate Dependent women and their babies: A study of the multi disciplinary work of a hospital and a local hospital* in British Journal of Social Work, 21 pp.105-126
- Klee, H. (2002) *Antenatal care: Expectations and experiences* in Klee, H. Jackson, M. Lewis, S. (eds), Drug Misuse and Motherhood London: Routledge
- Klee, H. (2002) *Drugs and pregnancy* in Klee, H. Jackson, M. Lewis, S. (eds), Drug Misuse and Motherhood London: Routledge
- Kroll, B. & Taylor, A. (2002) Parental Substance Misuse and Child Welfare London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

## References

- Mayet, S. Groskava, T. Morgan, L. MacCormack, T. Strang, J. (2008) *Drugs, alcohol and pregnant women – changing characteristics of women engaging with a specialist perinatal outreach addiction unit* in Drug and Alcohol Review Vol. 27, No. 5, pp.490-496
- Munro, E. (2008) Effective Child Protection London: Sage Publications
- Neale, J. (2004) *Gender and illicit drug use* in British Journal of Social Work Vol. 34, pp.851-870
- Powis, B. Gossop, M. Bury, C. Payne, K. Griffiths, P. (2000) *Drug using mothers: social, psychological and substance use problems of women opiate users with children* in Drug and Alcohol Review Vol.19, pp.171-180
- Prentice, S. and Watts, K. (2004) *An Audit Undertaken by a Specialist Midwife in Substance Misuse* in British Journal of Midwifery, Vol. 12, No. 12, pp.767-770.
- Street, K. Whitlingum, G. Gibson, P. Cairns, P. Ellis, M. (2008) *Is adequate parenting compatible with maternal drug use? A five-year follow up* in Child-Care, Health and Development Vol.34, No.2, pp. 204-206
- Velleman, R. Templeton. L. (2007) *Understanding and modifying the impact of parent substance misuse on children* in Advances in Psychiatric Treatment Vol. 13 pp.79-89
- Wright, S. (2002) *Women's use of drugs: Gender specific factors* in Klee, H. Jackson, M. Lewis, S. (eds), Drug Misuse and Motherhood London: Routledge

## References