

## 25 Studies linking abortion to substance abuse

Presented: World Psychiatric Association Conference (Melbourne Nov 2007)

Tracking 1,122 young women from birth at the Mater Hospital for 21 years, researcher Kaeleen Dingle from the Queensland University presented her findings of a clear link between self-destructive behaviour and abortion.

Those who had an abortion were:

- ↑ 3.6 times more likely to abuse hard drugs
- ↑ Twice as likely to be binge drinkers
- ↑ Nearly twice as likely to suffer depression

Those who miscarried were:

- ↑ 2.6 times more likely to abuse hard drugs.

Dingle, K., Alati, R., Clavarino, A., Najman, J. M., & Williams, G. M. (2008). Pregnancy loss and psychiatric disorders in young women: an Australian birth cohort study. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 193(6), 455-460.

Women who aborted were **3.8 times more likely to abuse drugs**, more likely to have mood and anxiety disorders and suicidal thought or actions. Analysed data collected using DSM-IV criteria from 3,310 nationally representative US women found **5.8% of suicidal ideation** and **24.7% drug use among US women** could be related to abortion.

Mota, N. P., Burnett, M., & Sareen, J. (2010). Associations between abortion, mental disorders, and suicidal behaviour in a nationally representative sample. *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 55(4), 239-247.

A study of pregnancy outcomes (abortion or carrying to term) based on a national survey of low-income women who delivered within the previous 18 months, found that: Irrespective of other difficulties raising a first child, a **lack of male support was associated with an abortion outcome** with the next pregnancy.

Those who had an abortion were:

- ↑ Over three times more likely to report heavy alcohol usage
- ↑ Twice as likely to report cigarette smoking
- ↑ More likely to report subsequently being slapped or kicked by the child's father.

Coleman, P. K., Maxey, C. D., Spence, M., & Nixon, C. L. (2009). Predictors and correlates of abortion in the fragile families and well-being study: paternal behavior, substance use, and partner violence. *International journal of mental health and addiction*, 7, 405-422.



A nationally representative US co-morbidity survey of 5,887 women found abortion to be associated with an increased risk of a variety of **mental health problems (panic attacks, panic disorder, agoraphobia, PTSD, bipolar disorder, major depression with and without hierarchy), and substance abuse disorder** after statistical controls were instituted for a wide range of personal, situational and demographic variables.

Coleman, P. K., Coyle, C. T., Shuping, M., & Rue, V. M. (2009). Induced abortion and anxiety, mood, and substance abuse disorders: isolating the effects of abortion in the national comorbidity survey. *Journal of psychiatric research*, 43(8), 770-776.

### **Unintended Pregnancies**

Adolescent girls who abort compared to their peers who carried unplanned pregnancies to term:

- ↑ 5 times more likely to seek help for psychological/emotional problems
- ↑ Over 3 times more likely to report trouble sleeping
- ↑ 9 times more likely to report marijuana use

Federally funded US longitudinal study of adolescent girls who participated in two series of interviews (1995&1996)

Coleman, P. K. (2006). Resolution of unwanted pregnancy during adolescence through abortion versus childbirth: Individual and family predictors and psychological consequences. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 35, 903-911.

A 25-year longitudinal study of 1,265 women born in Christchurch NZ, studied from birth to 25 years, found abortion associated with '...elevated rates of subsequent mental health problems including depression, anxiety, suicidal behaviours and substance use disorders. This association persisted after adjustment for confounding factors.'

Fergusson, D. M., John Horwood, L., & Ridder, E. M. (2006). Abortion in young women and subsequent mental health. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 47(1), 16-24.

Drawing on data from an 11 year federally-funded longitudinal study of adolescent girls throughout the US, researchers found adolescent girls who abort unintended pregnancies were found to be five times more likely to seek subsequent help for psychological and emotional problems, three times more likely to report subsequent trouble sleeping and nine times more likely to report subsequent marijuana use, compared to their peers who carry unwanted pregnancies to term.

Coleman, P. K. (2006). Resolution of unwanted pregnancy during adolescence through abortion versus childbirth: Individual and family predictors and psychological consequences. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 35, 903-911.

Compared to women who carries to term, women who abort are twice as likely to use alcohol, five times more likely use illicit drugs and ten times more likely to use marijuana during the first pregnancy they carry to term.

Coleman, P. K., Reardon, D. C., Rue, V. M., & Cogle, J. (2002). A history of induced abortion in relation to substance use during subsequent pregnancies carried to term. *American journal of obstetrics and gynecology*, 187(6), 1673-1678.

Compared to women who deliver unintended pregnancies to those who abort were more likely to report, an average of four years later, more frequent and recent use of alcohol, marijuana and cocaine.

Delivering women were found to be not generally different from their never-pregnant peers, with the exception that they used alcohol less frequently.

Reardon, D. C., Coleman, P. K., & Cogle, J. R. (2004). Substance use associated with unintended pregnancy outcomes in the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth. *The American journal of drug and alcohol abuse*, 30(2), 369-383.

Women who were binge drinkers during their pregnancy had a significantly higher rate of previous therapeutic abortions.

Gladstone, J., Levy, M., Nulman, I., & Koren, G. (1997). Characteristics of pregnant women who engage in binge alcohol consumption. *Cmaj*, 156(6), 789-794.

In a California study of more than 12,000 women during 1975 - 1977, of those having a history of two or more abortions, virtually all (98.5%) consumed alcohol throughout the entire nine months of a subsequent pregnancy and at higher levels than any of the other categories studied (up to 3 oz. Per day).

Kuzma, J. W., & Kissinger, D. G. (1981). Patterns of alcohol and cigarette use in pregnancy. *Neurobehavioral toxicology and teratology*, 3(2), 211-221.

In a study of inner-city adolescent mothers, those with a history of induced abortion were twice as likely to be involved in alcohol, marijuana or cocaine compared with non-using controls.

Amaro, H., Zuckerman, B., & Cabral, H. (1989). Drug use among adolescent mothers: Profile of risk. *Pediatrics*, 84(1), 144-151.

Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, drugs and tranquillizers was found in women who aborted compared to women who were refused abortion and had a variety of pregnancy outcomes where each group had presented for abortion for psychiatric reasons at a Capetown, South Africa hospital.

Drower, SJ & Nash, E. S. (1978). Therapeutic abortion on psychiatric grounds-Part I. A local study. *South African Medical Journal*, 54(15), 604-608.

In a 1991 Alabama study of women attending maternity, family planning and obstetrical clinics throughout the state, the prevalence of positive findings for any drug, marijuana or cocaine significantly increased with an increasing number of abortions.

Pegues, D. A., Engalgau, M. M., & Woernle, C. H. (1994). Prevalence of illicit drugs detected in the urine of women of childbearing age in Alabama public health clinics. *Public Health Reports*, 109(4), 530.

A significant association was found between a recorded and treated drug overdose either before or after an induced abortion with a majority of such events occurring within two years of each other.

Houston, H., & Jacobson, L. (1996). Overdose and termination of pregnancy: an important association?. *British journal of general practice*, 46(413), 737-738.

In a Toronto study of pregnant women, cocaine users had a higher mean average of elective abortions compared to non-users of drugs.

Graham, K., & Koren, G. (1991). Characteristics of pregnant women exposed to cocaine in Toronto between 1985 and 1990. *CMAJ: Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 144(5), 563.

A retrospective review of hospital charts over a one year period compared women who tested positive for cocaine during pregnancy compared with matched controls who did not use cocaine found that cocaine use was the best predictor of increased incidence of abortions.

Singer, L., Arendt, R., Song, L. Y., Warshawsky, E., & Kliegman, R. (1994). Direct and indirect interactions of cocaine with childbirth outcomes. *Archives of pediatrics & adolescent medicine*, 148(9), 959-964.

In a San Diego study of drug use, women who used heroin or methadone were more likely to have had abortions (2.4 vs. 1.2) than non-drug using controls.

Oro, A. S., & Dixon, S. D. (1987). Perinatal cocaine and methamphetamine exposure: maternal and neonatal correlates. *The Journal of pediatrics*, 111(4), 571-578.

A study of young women in the state New York found that the current use of illicit drugs (other than marijuana) was 6.1 times higher if there was a history of a prior abortion. In contrast, women with post marital births were much less likely (0.14) to report current use of illicit drugs.

Yamaguchi, K., & Kandel, D. (1987). Drug use and other determinants of premarital pregnancy and its outcome: A dynamic analysis of competing life events. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 257-270.

A survey of American women in 1981 indicated that those with an abortion history were over twice more likely to be heavy drinkers than the rest of the female population.

Klassen, A. D., & Wilsnack, S. C. (1986). Sexual experience and drinking among women in a US national survey. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 15, 363-392.

In a study of drug abuse among Boston inner-city women during pregnancy, those using cocaine were twice as likely to have a history of two elective abortions (19% vs.9%) and three times more likely to have had three or more elective abortions (9% vs. 3%) than non-cocaine using controls.

Frank, D. A., Zuckerman, B. S., Amaro, H., Aboagye, K., Bauchner, H., Cabral, H., ... & Vinci, R. (1988). Cocaine use during pregnancy: prevalence and correlates. *Pediatrics*, 82(6), 888-895.

Women hospitalised for major psychiatric disorders with a history of abortion were significantly more likely to have received the diagnosis of psychoactive substance abuse (DSM-III-R criteria) and significantly more likely to report substance abuse, alcohol abuse and cocaine abuse compared to women with no live birth.

Thomas, T., Tori, C. D., Wile, M. J. R., & Scheidt, S. D. (1996). Psychosocial characteristics of psychiatric inpatients with reproductive losses. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*, 7(1), 15-23.

Women who aborted a first pregnancy were five times more likely to report subsequent substance abuse compared to women who carried to term.

Reardon, D. C., & Ney, P. G. (2000). Abortion and subsequent substance abuse. *The American journal of drug and alcohol abuse*, 26(1), 61-75.

A study at the Medical College of Ohio compared differences in 35 women who had their abortion as teenagers with 36 women who had their abortions after the age of 20. Antisocial and paranoid disorders as well as drug abuse and psychotic delusions were found to be significantly higher in the group who aborted as teenagers. Adolescents were more likely to retreat into sexual activity or drug and alcohol abuse.

Campbell, N. B., Franco, K., & Jurs, S. (1988). Abortion in adolescence. *Adolescence*, 23(92), 813.

In a Scottish study of 1,008 women, those with a history of induced abortion had significantly higher self-reported levels of alcohol consumption in pregnancy than those with a history of stillbirth, miscarriage, or having had a mentally or physically handicapped child.

Moria Plant, 'Drinking and Pregnancy', *Women*, London: Tavistock Publications, 1985.