ASESSMENT OF ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION AMONG PREGNANT WOMEN IN ANTENATAL CLINIC (ANC) AT JIGMI DORJI WANGCHUK NATIONAL REFEREEAL HOSPITAL (JDWNHRH), THIMPHU, BHUTAN.

The Antenatal Clinic

A total of 312 women were interviewed as part of this study. The mean age of the participants was 27.9 years, with a standard deviation of 5.3 years. A total of 92 women (29.3%) reported consuming alcohol during pregnancy. The majority of the alcohol consumers were married (76.4%) and had a highest education level of secondary school (49.1%). The majority of the women consumed alcohol on a daily basis (61.3%). The most common alcohol consumed was beer (74.8%). The majority of the women (65.1%) reported consuming more than 5 drinks per week.

The study found that alcohol consumption among pregnant women was high, with 29.3% of women reporting consumption. This is concerning as alcohol consumption during pregnancy can have severe effects on the developing fetus, including fetal alcohol syndrome. It is important for healthcare providers to screen for alcohol consumption during prenatal care and provide appropriate interventions for those who consume alcohol.

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Drinking alcohol by men, women and children is widely accepted and practiced in Bhutanese society. Homemade alcohol is used by post-natal mothers with a belief it increases flow of breast milk for baby and promote comfort and healing for mother. This cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted in June 2011 with an objective to access alcohol consumption among pregnant women attending antenatal clinic at Jigme Dorji Wangchuk National Referral Hospital (JDWNRH) in Thimphu, Bhutan. Structured questionnaires and alcohol use disorder identification test (AUDIT) questions were used for face to face interview with 312 pregnant women. Data was analyzed using SPSS. Lifetime alcohol consumption was 203 (65.1%), last one year drink 165 (52.9%), last three months 79 (25.3%) last one month 74 (23.7%) and last one week was 34 (10.9%). Out of nine types of alcohol listed for this study pregnant women mostly consumed homemade rice wine called “changkey” and distilled alcohol drink “ara”. Commercial products women mostly consume were beer and wine. The main reason for alcohol consumption was tradition, culture and customs and women had positive feelings towards alcohol especially homemade alcohol. They also drank to promote sleep and comfort.

Although 92% of pregnant women heard about effects of alcohol on fetus, they still continued drinking during pregnancy. Therefore, all pregnant women should be screened for alcohol consumption and advised to abstain from drinking during entire pregnancy. In-depth studies with special focus on homemade alcohol are recommended in all the ANC clinics in the country for appropriate future interventions.