MotherToBaby Secures Vital Funding to Empower Expectant Parents and Address Birth Defects

MotherToBaby is the Leading National Resource on Exposures during Pregnancy and Breastfeeding

BRENTWOOD, TN – The non-profit Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS), which provides the MotherToBaby free service, receives new funding aimed at enhancing partnerships to address birth defects, infant disorders and related conditions, and the health of pregnant and postpartum people. The grant is supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The funding is a five-year award beginning October 1, 2023. “This remarkable funding is a testament to our tireless dedication to staying ahead of the curve when it comes to diseases, infections, and empowering the public with the latest information,” said Alfred Romeo, RN, PhD, President of MotherToBaby. “We are thrilled to collaborate with numerous organizations to amplify the impact of our vital work,” he added.

Great strides will be made under this grant, including collecting and disseminating data, developing and distributing data-driven resources, forging valuable partnerships, and fostering community engagement to raise awareness of the invaluable services provided by MotherToBaby.

“This support is a game-changer, enabling us to further equip pregnant and breastfeeding individuals with crucial information, especially during health crises like the recent COVID-19 pandemic,” Romeo emphasized. “The partnerships we build will help us navigate the next emerging issue affecting people who are pregnant and breastfeeding.”

MotherToBaby provides information on exposures, like medications, vaccines, diseases, herbal supplements, occupational exposures and more before and during a pregnancy as well as while breastfeeding. The service is provided through its no-cost helpline 866-626-6847, texting service 855-999-3525 and website www.MotherToBaby.org, where the public can live chat, e-mail an expert or browse a library of fact sheets in English and Spanish. Additionally, MotherToBaby hosts LactRx, a free app providing current information on the use of medications, vaccines, diagnostic agents, and drugs of misuse during breastfeeding. LactRx is available for iPhone and Android.

More about OTIS and MotherToBaby

The Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS) is a professional scientific society made up of individuals engaged in assessing and evaluating risks to pregnancy and breastfeeding from environmental exposures. Members include, but are not limited to, specialists in the fields of obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics, genetics, dysmorphology, perinatal epidemiology, teratology, behavioral teratology, pharmacy, genetic counseling, nursing,

midwifery, maternal and child health, public health, and includes experts that provide MotherToBaby services and researchers that conduct MotherToBaby Pregnancy Studies. To learn more about MotherToBaby and OTIS, please visit www.MotherToBaby.org.

Media Contact: Nicole Chavez, 619-368-3259, nchavez@mothertobaby.org

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PLEASE NOTE: This webinar has already passed, but the recorded version can be seen at the following link: http://bit.ly/2Hfcr6z

OTIS, Teratology Society, SMFM, NSGC Team Up to Shed Light on Prenatal and Postnatal Marijuana Exposure Effects

BRENTWOOD, TN – From plant form to CBD oil, with increasing legalization of marijuana across U.S. states, there comes the need for more information on its impact should a consumer become pregnant. Birth defects experts from the Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS), the scientific non-profit society that provides the MotherToBaby no-cost service, are offering the latest data surrounding marijuana exposure in pregnancy and lactation during a free webinar for healthcare providers on May 2, 2019 at 12p Pacific/3p Eastern.

“If I use edibles instead of smoke marijuana, that should be safer during pregnancy and breastfeeding, right?” – It’s

just one of the many questions the MotherToBaby service, which answers questions about exposures during pregnancy and breastfeeding via phone, text, live chat and its MotherToBaby.org website, is now receiving on a regular basis according to Christina Chambers, PhD, MPH, MotherToBaby president and professor of pediatrics at the University of California, San Diego. Dr. Chambers also heads up Mommy's Milk Human Milk Research Biorepository, the first-ever research database of human breast milk which produced a ground-breaking study last year suggesting that marijuana can linger in breast milk for far longer (up to six days) than previously thought. "As more states legalize marijuana for medicinal and recreational use, it's critical we look at how it's impacting the next generation," she said.

The webinar, "Sifting through the Smoke: The Latest Research Surrounding Marijuana Exposure in Pregnancy and Breastfeeding," is a collaboration with the National Society of Genetic Counselors (NSGC) and, in addition to OTIS/MotherToBaby, will include presenters representing the Teratology Society and the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine (SMFM). The webinar is free and aimed at healthcare providers and researchers; registration is required at the following link: http://bit.ly/MarijuanaWebinar2019.

"Older studies have suggested that if a mother uses marijuana during pregnancy, she might be at risk for having a smaller baby born early and/or having it experience developmental delays," said Sarah Obican, MD, a Maternal-Fetal Medicine subspecialist at the University of South Florida, director of MotherToBaby's Florida affiliate, and Dr. Chambers' co-presenter for the webinar. "However, marijuana is produced today at a higher potency level, so it's critical we stay vigilant in our research to better understand its impact," she added.

The webinar is expected to run approximately one hour and presenters will be available to answer questions from attendees.

More about OTIS and MotherToBaby

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Media Contact: Nicole Chavez, 619-368-3259, nchavez@MotherToBaby.org.

Questions? Call 866.626.6847 | Text 855.999.3525 | Email or Chat at MotherToBaby.org.

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In case you missed it during January's Birth Defects Prevention Month, MotherToBaby, in coordination with the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine (SMFM) and the Teratology Society, offered a free two-part webinar series for healthcare providers on the importance of pregnancy exposure research, its challenges and the new Task Force on Research Specific to Pregnant and Lactating Women (PRGLAC) report. The recorded webinar series can be viewed at the following links:

- Current and Future Trends in Research with Pregnant and Lactating Women (Part 1): http://bit.ly/PregResearch1
- Using Registries and Crowdsourcing to Conduct Research with Pregnant and Lactating Women (Part 2): http://bit.ly/PregResearch2

Questions? Call 866.626.6847 | Text 855.999.3525 | Email or Chat at MotherToBaby.org.

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‘Best for You. Best for Baby.’ Focus of National Birth Defects Prevention Month 2019

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 8, 2019

BRENTWOOD, TN – “A baby is born with a birth defect in the United States every 4 ½ minutes. We can change that alarming statistic,” said Christina Chambers, PhD, MPH, President of MotherToBaby, a free service of the non-profit Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS). MotherToBaby is joining with leading prenatal health experts from the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), American Academy of Pediatrics, the March of Dimes, and the Teratology Society this month to increase awareness of 5 critical tips to reduce the chances of having a baby with a birth defect.

The National Birth Defects Prevention Month campaign theme, **“Best for You. Best for Baby.”** aims to raise awareness of preventable birth defects. “Furthermore, we want to emphasize the importance of pregnancy registries, which often lead to the discovery of even more ways to prevent birth defects,” explained Dr. Chambers, who also serves as professor of pediatrics at UC San Diego. MotherToBaby will join the Teratology Society and the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine in co-hosting a free two-part webinar series for healthcare providers on the importance of pregnancy exposure research, its challenges and the new Task Force on Research Specific to Pregnant and Lactating Women (PRGLAC) report. The webinar series will take place **Thursday January 17th at 1pm-1:30 ET** and **Tuesday January 29th at 12pm-12:30p E**T and will be free to join, but advanced registration is required at the following links:



- ***Current and Future Trends in Research with Pregnant and Lactating Women (Part 1)***: http://bit.ly/PregResearch1
- ***Using Registries and Crowdsourcing to Conduct Research with Pregnant and Lactating Women (Part 2):*** http://bit.ly/PregResearch2

MotherToBaby provides free evidence-based information to mothers, health care professionals, and the general public

about medications and other exposures during pregnancy and while breastfeeding through its helpline (866) 626-6847, texting service (855) 999-3525, or via live chat and email on www.MotherToBaby.org. MotherToBaby also has a free app available for iOS and Android devices. MotherToBaby is recommended by many agencies, including the CDC.

MotherToBaby encourages the public to follow these steps to increase chances of a having a healthy baby:

- Be sure to take 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid every day.
  • Folic acid is very important because it can help prevent some major birth defects of the baby's brain and spine.
- Book a visit with your healthcare provider before stopping or starting any medicine.
  • There are often benefits to continuing treatment throughout pregnancy. Discussing a treatment plan before a pregnancy allows a woman and her health care provider to weigh the pros and cons of all options to keep mom and baby as healthy as possible.
- Become up-to-date with all vaccines, including the flu shot.
  • Having the right vaccinations, like the flu and Tdap vaccines, at the right time during pregnancy can help keep a woman and her baby healthy.
- Before you get pregnant, try to reach a healthy weight.
  • Obesity increases the risk for several serious birth defects and other pregnancy complications.
- Boost your health by avoiding harmful substances during pregnancy, such as alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.
  • There is no known safe amount of alcohol during pregnancy and its exposure can cause major birth defects.
  • Smoking during pregnancy can cause dangerous chemicals to damage the placenta and/or reach baby's bloodstream.
  • The opioid addiction epidemic has led to a sharp increase in Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS), premature birth and drug withdrawal in developing babies.

"Birth defects are a common cause of death in the first year of a baby's life, but change happens through awareness," added Jason L. Salemi, PhD, MPH, NBDPN President. "We're thrilled MotherToBaby is doing its part to positively change the outcome for babies across North America."

How You Can Help

MotherToBaby encourages health advocates as well as the general public to be active participants in National Birth Defects Prevention Month. Follow and share **#Best4YouBest4Baby** messages on social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. In addition, the complete 2019 NBDPN Birth Defects Prevention Month information packet, including this year's primary tips for birth defects prevention, **"Best for You. Best for Baby. 5 Tips for Preventing Birth Defects,"** is available online at: https://www.nbdpn.org/bdpm.php. All materials can be printed, electronically conveyed, or added to websites for distribution as needed.

Additional Resources to Support Healthy Pregnancies

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
The CDC's National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities (NCBDDD) strives to advance the health and well-being of our nation's most vulnerable populations.
www.CDC.gov/ncbddd

American Academy of Pediatrics
Dedicated to the health of all children, providing age-specific health information.
www.healthychildren.org

The Teratology Society
An international and multidisciplinary group of scientists including researchers, clinicians, epidemiologists, and public health professionals from academia, government and industry who study birth defects, reproduction, and disorders of developmental origin.
www.Teratology.org

March of Dimes

An organization aiming to make sure babies get the strongest start possible as well as reducing the rate of prematurity.
www.marchofdimes.org

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