From Climate Change's Effects in Pregnancy to Gestational Marijuana Use, Top Scientists Present Latest Research

MotherToBaby, Teratology Society, DNTS Come Together June 22 – 25 in San Diego and Host Facebook Live Event for the Public

SAN DIEGO, CA – "It's an incomparable gathering of experts," said Christina Chambers, PhD, MPH, MotherToBaby President, Teratology Society Past President and Professor of Pediatrics at UC San Diego in reference to the 32nd Annual Meeting of the Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS), the non-profit behind the no-cost MotherToBaby service. MotherToBaby provides evidence-based information about exposures during pregnancy and breastfeeding. The OTIS Annual Meeting will take place at the Sheraton San Diego Hotel and Marina June 22 – 25 and be held jointly with other leading organizations in the field of birth defects research.

Dr. Chambers, who recently made headlines with her groundbreaking study showing that certain marijuana compounds linger much longer in breast milk than previously thought, described the Annual Meeting as "critical to future generations." "New information will be shared at this meeting on hot topics, such as cigarette smoking and marijuana in pregnancy, as well as advancements in understanding birth defects, like congenital heart defects," she said. "It's this kind of information that can lead to better treatment for expectant and nursing moms."

The OTIS Annual Meeting will be held simultaneously and on-location with the Teratology Society (TS) and the Developmental Neurotoxicology Society (DNTS), whose meetings extend until June 26. Other hot topics to be discussed at the various meetings include:

- Environmental Influences on Child Health Outcomes (ECHO): A National Research Program (joint with OTIS-TS-DNTS)
- Congenital Heart Defects Research: Finding the Hidden Crossroads between Genetics and Environment (joint with OTIS-TS)
- A Smoking Gun that Faced Opposition: The Causal Agent of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (joint with OTIS-TS)
- Cigarette Smoking and Development (OTIS)
- The Scientific Evidence for Short and Long-term Risks of Gestational Marijuana Use and Marijuana Use during Breastfeeding (OTIS)
- Ocean-Borne Risks to Pregnant Women and Their Babies (joint with TS-DNTS)
- Maternal Morbidity and Mortality: Causes, Disparities and Solutions (TS)
- What Do We Need to Know about Climate Change and Effects on Maternal-Fetal Health? (TS)

Scientists and healthcare providers in Southern California are encouraged to attend as day passes are still available for all meetings. To register, visit OTIS' and the Teratology Society's registration pages.

In addition, a Facebook Live event will be held Saturday, June 22 at 5p during which MotherToBaby's Facebook followers can ask questions about "what's ok" during pregnancy and breastfeeding. The event is aimed at the pregnant or breastfeeding mother as well as healthcare providers. To be alerted of the event, follow @MotherToBaby on Facebook. "Our Facebook followers will be able to get the latest research-based answers directly from world-renowned experts attending the Annual Meeting about everything from marijuana to medications and their known effects on a pregnancy or while breastfeeding," described Chris Stallman, a certified genetic counselor and host of the Facebook Live event. Stallman is also host of The MotherToBaby Podcast, available on iTunes, Google Play, Spotify, Stitcher and podcatcher services everywhere. "No topic will be off-limits and we hope the public will take advantage of this rare opportunity to get a behind-the-scenes look at the scientists providing the MotherToBaby service."

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. MotherToBaby is a suggested resource by many federal agencies including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). To be connected with a MotherToBaby expert, please call (866) 626-6847, text questions to (855) 999-3525 (standard messaging rates might apply, check with your carrier) or visit www.MotherToBaby.org.

About the Teratology Society

The Teratology Society is 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. The Teratology Society is made up of nearly 700 members worldwide specializing in a variety of disciplines, including developmental biology and toxicology, reproduction and endocrinology, epidemiology, cell and molecular biology, nutritional biochemistry, and genetics as well as the clinical disciplines of prenatal medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics, neonatology, medical genetics, and teratogen risk counseling. Scientists interested in membership in the Teratology Society are encouraged to visit www.teratology.org. The society's official journal, ***Birth Defects Research,*** is published by John Wiley & Sons in partnership with the Teratology Society.

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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.

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agencies including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). To be connected with a MotherToBaby expert, please call (866) 626-6847, text questions to (855) 999-3525 (standard messaging rates might apply, check with your carrier) or visit www.MotherToBaby.org.

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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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