

OTIS AWARDED \$6M IN FEDERAL FUNDING TO HELP PREVENT BIRTH DEFECTS



OTIS' MotherToBaby Network Connects the General Public with Birth Defects Experts

BRENTWOOD, TN –“Funding this type of service ultimately means mothers will be better informed and babies will have stronger starts in life,” said Kenneth Lyons Jones, MD, a world-renowned UC San Diego pediatrician, upon receiving notice that the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) will support the Organization of Teratology Information Specialists’ (OTIS) MotherToBaby network for five more years with a \$6 million cooperative agreement.

The funding announcement comes just as OTIS’ first two-year cooperative agreement and one-year extension was about to expire later this month and will allow the group to strengthen collaborations with other HRSA grantees, such as Title V Maternal Child Health, Community Health Centers, Poison Control Systems, Healthy Start and Nurse-Family Partnership programs throughout the country to make a collective impact on healthy pregnancy outcomes.

Dr. Jones, who serves as the project’s principal investigator, said OTIS has come a long way since the 1980s, during which his involvement with forming the group was solidified shortly after he and David W. Smith, MD first identified Fetal Alcohol Syndrome in 1973. “We knew exposures like alcohol during pregnancy had dire consequences, but there wasn’t a direct way to educate the public and answer their questions about it at the time,” he explained. “Today, we have MotherToBaby.”

MotherToBaby consists of 14 affiliate OTIS sites housed at universities, health departments and hospitals across the country and connects world-renowned experts in the field of teratology (exposures that cause birth defects) to the general public and health care providers via **app, text, live chat, email**, phone and in-person. Through the various modes of contact, the public can ask questions about the known risks of medications, chemicals, herbal products, illicit drugs, diseases and much more during pregnancy and while breastfeeding.

“MotherToBaby is a blessing and I cannot express that enough,” stated R.M., a mother from Georgia who recently contributed to MotherToBaby’s testimonial webpage expressing her appreciation for the service. “Knowing the true facts about how I can best provide for my health and my baby’s health, I feel at ease knowing that I can not only stay on my medicine to keep me well, but also it is the best choice for my baby,” she wrote.

“That comment is why we do what we do,” said Stephen Braddock, MD, in reference to the testimonial. Dr. Braddock, the current OTIS president, points out how a recent 32% increase in MotherToBaby staff coupled with the launch of digital initiatives, such as the MotherToBaby app and text service, has contributed to a 150% increase in the number of women the group has been able to serve over the last year alone. “Because of this new cooperative agreement, more women, particularly those in traditionally underserved communities, will have access to the tools they need in order to make educated decisions about their health and the health of their babies.”

More about MotherToBaby, a service of OTIS

MotherToBaby is a suggested resource by many federal agencies including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) Office of Women’s Health, and HRSA, and provides the most up-to-date information. More than 100,000 women and their health care providers seek information about birth defects prevention from MotherToBaby every year. Additionally, MotherToBaby conducts observational research studies in order to contribute more information to the published literature about a variety of exposures. 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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Media Contact: Nicole Chavez, 619-368-3259, nchavez@MotherToBaby.org. Interviews in Spanish can also be arranged.

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

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Birth Defects Experts, Colorado Chief Medical Officer to Present at OTIS, Teratology Society, DNTS Annual Meeting

DENVER, COLORADO—"From exposure during pregnancy to a child's neurological development, it is an understatement to say the legalization of marijuana has the potential to impact Colorado's children and families," said

Larry Wolk, MD, Chief Medical Officer for the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. That “potential impact” is why Dr. Wolk will join top international researchers for a meeting never before held in Denver that brings together world-renowned experts presenting the science behind birth defects research.

The meeting, which is held jointly with the Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS), the Teratology Society and the Developmental Neurotoxicology Society this week at the Grand Hyatt Denver, will have a special focus on the effects of marijuana exposure during pregnancy. Dr. Wolk will serve as the Keynote Speaker **Monday, June 26 at 8am**. Then, a “Marijuana and Child Development Symposium,” which features scientists from the University of Colorado at Denver, University of California at San Diego, Yale University and the National Institute on Drug Abuse, takes place **Tuesday, June 27 at 3:05pm**.

According to MotherToBaby, a service of OTIS that offers information to the public about exposures during pregnancy and breastfeeding through traditional and digital avenues, the growing rate of marijuana use during pregnancy is “deeply concerning.” A **federal survey** published late last year indicated that almost 4 percent of expecting mothers said they had used marijuana in the past 30 days. This rate is almost twice that for other illicit drugs used in the previous month by pregnant women.

The survey was conducted in 2014. In a survey just 12 years prior, only 2.4 percent had said they used marijuana in the past month.

“As scientists specializing in the effects exposures can have during pregnancy, this trend is extremely worrisome and we’re here to work together to find answers,” said Stephen Braddock, MD, OTIS/MotherToBaby’s president and a professor of Pediatrics at Saint Louis University. “At MotherToBaby, we are frequently contacted by women who want to know if marijuana is safe in pregnancy. New information that will be shared at this meeting will help us to gain a better idea of what the risks are, so that we can better educate expectant and nursing moms as well as healthcare providers.”

“While data are somewhat limited, we know there are risks associated with marijuana use in pregnancy, but we also need to be thinking about the potential impact of cannabis on the adolescent brain,” added Diana Dow-Edwards, PhD, President-elect of the Developmental Neurotoxicology Society, marijuana symposium co-chair, and professor at SUNY Downstate Medical Center. “New and breakthrough science will be presented by some of our speakers and we hope the knowledge stimulates discussion among concerned Denver-area health care providers and the general public alike,” noted Susan Makris, PhD, Teratology Society Public Affairs Committee chair, marijuana symposium co-chair and a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency scientist.

Additional scientific information presented during the meeting includes e-cigarette use in pregnancy and the latest Zika virus findings. More information and the full annual meeting program may be found on the **57th Annual Meeting website**. One day registration is available for any local scientists and health care providers interested in attending.

About OTIS/MotherToBaby

MotherToBaby, a service of the Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS), is a suggested resource by many agencies including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) Office of Women’s Health. OTIS was established in 1987 as a way of connecting world-renowned experts in the field of birth defects research to the general public. Today, MotherToBaby affiliates around the world provide the most cutting-edge and up-to-date information about the risks of medications, chemicals, herbal products, illicit drugs, diseases and much more during pregnancy and while breastfeeding. More than 100,000 women and their health care providers seek information about birth defects prevention from MotherToBaby every year. MotherToBaby has been able to embark on new outreach efforts to reach underserved populations and launch new communication technologies through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration, as well as through the generous donations made by the public. To learn more about MotherToBaby, the ways to contact its network of experts via **app, text, live chat, email** and phone line, or how to support its services, please visit **www.MotherToBaby.org**.

About the Teratology Society

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.

About DNTS

The Developmental Neurotoxicology Society (DNTS) is focused on studies of the origins of neurodevelopmental disorders and the long-term effects of chemicals and drugs on health and well-being. We promote scientific research on the developmental origins of brain disorders at all life stages. For more information, please visit us at www.dntshome.org. The society's official journal, *Neurotoxicology and Teratology*, is published by Elsevier in partnership with DNTS.

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In case you missed it, MotherToBaby teratogen information specialist Dee Quinn, MS, CGC, presented "Update on Zika Infections in Pregnancy" on Tuesday, April 4, 2017. The webinar was hosted by the National Society of Genetic Counselors, a MotherToBaby partner. **A recording of the webinar is now available.** It is free and open to the public and can be seen at the following link: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/2700973782242097665>



Free Webinar

Update on Zika Infections in Pregnancy

April 4, 2017 at 11a Pacific/1p Central/2p Eastern

A webinar hosted by the National Society of Genetic Counselors (NSGC) & presented by MotherToBaby, a service of the Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS)

FEATURING: DEE QUINN, MS, CGC, MOTHERTOBABY AZ

FREE & OPEN TO THE PUBLIC BUT REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED AT:
BIT.LY/ZIKA2WEBINAR

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March 3rd is World Birth Defects Day and MotherToBaby, along with more than 50 birth defects-related organizations around the world, is helping raise awareness of this critical global issue. The commemorative day not only helps raise awareness of the problem of birth defects, but also the importance of improving prevention strategies and research that will ultimately lead to fewer birth defects and a healthier society. We are proud to have teamed up with the North American Anti-Epileptic Drug (AED) Pregnancy Registry, the Teratology Society and the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN) to bring you this animated video with key tips on birth defects prevention. Please share! #WorldBDDay

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