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Moving talks at the Primary Care Show

A few weeks ago, I attended this year's Primary Care Show at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham. I was very pleased to be able to speak with some of you about the journal and have the time to attend the talks in the Mother and Baby programme. Overall, it was an enjoyable and educational conference and exhibition.

Some of the speakers chose to focus on issues in pregnancy, including the risks of smoking and alcohol consumption, both of which can have devastating effects. The talks were delivered very well, and I came away with an enhanced understanding of these important topics, as I am sure the rest of the audience did as well.

Claire Allison, maternity lead for the Phoenix Team in Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, explored tobacco use in maternity services. As I highlighted in my editorial last month (Allkins, 2024), smoking while pregnant is associated with increased risk of stillbirth, preterm birth, miscarriage and sudden infant death (Action on Smoking and Health, 2021). The UK's smokefree targets emphasise the current focus on reducing the prevalence of this issue.

Dr Inyang Takon, consultant neurodevelopmental paediatrician at the East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust, discussed alcohol consumption during pregnancy. Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder is the result of alcohol passing to a baby through the placenta, which can damage the baby's brain and body, leading to mental and physical issues (NHS, 2023). According to the FASD Network UK (2024), this affects 2–5% of the population.

One of the talks that I found particularly affecting was Rachel Small's talk on the impact of pregnancy loss up to 24 weeks. Rachel Small is a clinical matron in gynaecology and early pregnancy at the University Hospitals Birmingham NHS



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Foundation Trust, as well as the chair of the Association of Early Pregnancy Units. Her talk focused on the people affected by pregnancy loss, including women, their families and healthcare professionals. She also explored challenges to ensuring that, in the current setting, women and their families have a suitable space available at such a difficult time.

All these topics, particularly those surrounding the loss of a baby, can be difficult to discuss, whether at a conference, with colleagues or with service users. This is likely to be especially true for any midwives or other maternity workers who have personal experiences of these issues. However, it is vital that we continue to publish research, share best practice and have these discussions, to ensure that women in the UK, and their families, continue to receive the best possible care from maternity services. **BJM**

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