

New Normative Data Will Improve Diagnosis of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

Toronto, February 16, 2010. Fetal Alcohol Research, the official journal of FACE (Fetal Alcohol Canadian Expertise), has published breakthrough research by Dr. Sterling Clarren, CEO and Chief Scientific Officer of Canada Northwest FASD Research Network and colleagues, establishing Canadian norms which will allow more accurate diagnosis of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). **Normal Distribution of Palpebral Fissure Lengths in Canadian School Age Children**, by S. Clarren, A.E. Chudley, L. Wong, J.Friesen, R. Brant @ <http://www.cjcp.ca/pubmed.php?articleId=253>

FASD is the most prevalent cause of mental handicap among Canadian children. Caused by maternal drinking during pregnancy, FASD poses difficult diagnostic challenges. One of the hallmark physical features of FASD is the horizontal length of the eye slit opening (palpebral fissure). Affected children often have smaller eye slits for their age. To be able to define the relative size of the eye, it is crucial to have normative values from the population of healthy children. Till now these definitions were based on old data that did not include all racial and ethnic groups as represented in Canada. There was concern that some populations might have smaller eye size genetically.

Dr. Clarren said, “We found that eye size is similar enough in all racial groups that they can be evaluated through the same normal sample. We also found that the normal values are much smaller than in those presented in the literature. This finding is important because as many as 40% of children with normal eye size would have been diagnosed with have small eyes slits on the older charts regardless of their genetic background. These new data are critical if FAS prevalence is to be accurately measured in our country or anywhere else.”

To interview Dr. Clarren, e-mail sclarren@cw.bc.ca or call (604) 875- 2996

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