The Problem of Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome

Wanda Barfield, MD, MPH
CAPT, U.S. Public Health Service
Director, Division of Reproductive Health
National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

Accessible Version: https://youtu.be/g5RW_y60En0
What is Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS)?

- Drug withdrawal syndrome that occurs primarily among opioid-exposed infants shortly after birth

- Withdrawal symptoms most commonly occur 48–72 hours after birth
  - Tremors, hyperactive reflexes, seizures
  - Excessive or high-pitched crying, irritability, yawning, stuffy nose, sneezing, sleep disturbances
  - Poor feeding and sucking, vomiting, loose stools, dehydration, poor weight gain
  - Increased sweating, temperature instability, fever

Additional Effects of NAS

➢ **In utero effects:**
  ● Poor fetal growth
  ● Preterm birth

➢ **Postnatal effects:**
  ● Prolonged hospitalization (including NICU admission)
  ● Poor postnatal growth, dehydration, and seizures

➢ **Data on long-term developmental outcomes related to NAS are limited**

NICU: Neonatal intensive care unit
Exposures Associated with NAS

- **Most commonly attributed to exposure to opioids**
  - Pain relievers: Vicodin®, OxyContin®, Percocet®
  - Illicit substances: Heroin
  - Opioid maintenance therapy: Methadone, buprenorphine
    - Maintenance therapy: Long-term treatment for opioid use disorder, under medical supervision, with a longer-acting but less euphoric opioid
    - Recommended by ACOG during pregnancy

- **Cocaine, amphetamines, and barbiturates have also been implicated**
Terminology Related to Opioids

- **Opioid use**: Taking an opioid to reduce pain
  - Broad category includes morphine, codeine, synthetic opioids (e.g., fentanyl or methadone) and semisynthetic opioids (e.g., oxycodone)

- **Opioid abuse or misuse**: Use of prescription drugs without a prescription, or in a manner other than as directed by the prescriber

- **Opioid dependence**: Physiologic adaptation to opioids that produces symptoms of withdrawal when opioids are stopped

- **Opioid use disorder**: Problematic pattern of opioid use leading to clinically significant impairment or distress

[cdc.gov/drugoverdose/opioids/index.html](https://cdc.gov/drugoverdose/opioids/index.html)

Incidence of NAS in the United States, 2000–2012

Increase in Affected Infants

- 2,920 in the year 2000
- 21,732 in the year 2012
- In 2012, one infant with NAS was born every 25 minutes

NAS Incidence by Geographic Region, 2012


NAS per 1,000 Hospital Births

- 15–20
- 10–15
- 5–10
- 0–5
Incidence of Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome
25 States, 2012–2013

Incidence rates per 1,000 hospital births

NAS and the Prescription Opioid Epidemic


Age-adjusted rate of drug overdose deaths and drug overdose deaths involving opioids in the United States, 2000–2014
Opioid Abuse and Dependence Among Pregnant Women


Opioid abuse or dependence per 1,000 deliveries, overall and by age in the U.S., 1998–2011
Prescribing of Opioids to Women of Reproductive Age

Opioid Prescription Claims by Type of Health Insurance Among Women of Reproductive Age (15–44 years), United States, 2008–2012

Challenges in Preventing Opioid Use Prior to Conception

- Nearly 50% of all pregnancies in the United States are unintended.
- 86% of pregnancies are unintended among women who abuse opioids.
- Women using opioids may not initially know they are pregnant.

Infants with NAS: Treatment and Costs

- Exposed infants can require pharmacologic treatment (e.g. morphine, methadone, phenobarbital)
  - 30%, 68%, and 91% of NAS infants required pharmacologic treatment in separate studies

- Mean length of hospital stay: 23 days

- Mean hospital charge: $93,400 per infant

- Total cost: $1.5 billion
  - Medicaid is most common payer ($1.2 billion)

It’s Not Just About the Baby

➢ Public health approach is needed to provide prevention of opioid use disorder across the lifespan for:
  ● Neonates and infants
  ● Pregnant mothers
  ● Women and men of reproductive age prior to conception
  ● Youth
  ● Older adults
Beyond the Tip of the Iceberg: NAS Prevention and Preconception Health

Cheryl S. Broussard, PhD
Health Scientist, Birth Defects Branch
National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities
Opioid Prescription Use Among Women of Reproductive Age and Pregnant Women

According to U.S. estimates:

- One third of reproductive-aged women filled a prescription for an opioid medication
- 14%–22% of women filled an opioid medication prescription during pregnancy

Drug Overdose Deaths Among Women

cdc.gov/vitalsigns/prescriptionpainkilleroverdoses/index.html
Every 3 Minutes, a Woman Goes to the Emergency Department for Prescription Pain Reliever Misuse or Abuse

Women between the ages of 25 and 54 are most likely to go to the emergency department because of prescription opioid misuse or abuse.

ED: Emergency department
cdc.gov/vitalsigns/prescriptionpainkilleroverdoses/index.html
Three Pillars of CDC’s Work to Reverse the Prescription Drug Overdose Epidemic

- **Improve data** quality and track trends
- **Strengthen state efforts** by scaling up effective public health interventions
- **Supply health care providers with resources** to improve patient safety
Primary Prevention Opportunities for NAS

Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain

Outside of Active Cancer, Palliative, and End-of-life Care

Primary Care

Excerpts from CDC Recommendations: Providers for Preconception and Pregnant Women

- Before initiating opioid therapy for chronic pain for reproductive-aged women, discuss family planning and how long-term opioid use might affect any future pregnancy.
- Carefully weigh risks and benefits with pregnant patients when making decisions about whether to initiate opioid therapy.

START LOW. GO SLOW.

www.cdc.gov GUIDELINE FOR PRESCRIBING OPIOIDS FOR CHRONIC PAIN

Excerpts from CDC Recommendations: Providers for Pregnant Women

- For pregnant women with opioid use disorder, medication-assisted therapy with buprenorphine (without naloxone) or methadone has been associated with improved maternal outcomes and should be offered
  - Access appropriate expertise if considering tapering opioids during pregnancy because of possible risk to the patient and fetus (e.g., spontaneous abortion and premature labor) if the patient goes into withdrawal

- Arrange for delivery at a facility prepared to evaluate and treat neonatal abstinence syndrome

Some States Have Higher Opioid Prescribing Rates, 2012

Number of opioid prescriptions per 100 people

- 52-71
- 72-82.1
- 82.2-95
- 96-143
Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs (PDMPs)

- State-based databases of controlled prescription drugs dispensed by pharmacies
- Currently in 49 states (not Missouri)
- Contain critical clinical data that can help
  - Identify patients at risk for opioid-related overdoses
    - On high total doses, receiving from multiple sources
  - Inform providers of other medications the patient is receiving that may interact with those prescribed
  - Identify patients struggling with opioid use disorder
Evidence of Decreasing Opioid Use Before and During Pregnancy

Women who used a prescription opioid medication, U.S. commercial claims, 2011–2013

- **Women of reproductive age** (15-44 years)
- **Pregnant women**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

CDC, unpublished data
Truven Health Analytics MarketScan® Treatment Pathways V3.0 Commercial claims database
Projected Decrease in Opioid Use Before and During Pregnancy

Women who used a prescription opioid medication, U.S. commercial claims, 2014–2016

Women of reproductive age (15-44 years)

Pregnant women

CDC, unpublished data
Primary Prevention Opportunities for NAS

- Increased access to effective contraception both pre-pregnancy and post-delivery, including support for long-acting reversible contraception (LARC)
  - Intrauterine devices (IUDs)
  - Contraceptive implants

CDC’s Treating for Two Initiative

Expand and accelerate research to fill knowledge gaps

Evaluate evidence to facilitate reliable guidance

Deliver up-to-date information to support decision-making among prescribers, pharmacists, and consumers
Our vision: All women and men of reproductive age will achieve optimal health and wellness, fostering a healthy life course for them and any children they may have.
Public Health Impact of Improved Preconception Health Care and Appropriate Opioid Prescribing

**Patients**
Optimal treatment before pregnancy and healthier babies

**Prescribers**
Responsible patient care (e.g., pain management)

**Pharmacists**
More effective consumer counseling

**CDC and Health Departments**
Improved ability to decrease misuse of prescription drugs
Trend data indicate decreases in opioid prescribing during pregnancy but at population level exposure is still high.

Aim is optimal treatment for women with opioid use disorder, including maintenance therapy when indicated.

Prevention strategies for NAS include not only decreasing exposure to opioids through evidence-based prescribing, but also broader attention to preconception health, including increased use of LARC.
Prescription Opioid and Substance Use in Pregnancy: Screening and Treatment

Kimberly A. Yonkers, MD

Director, Center for Wellbeing of Women and Mothers
Professor, Psychiatry, Epidemiology, Obstetrics, Gynecology, and Reproductive Sciences
Yale University School of Medicine
Considerations with Regard to Screening for Substance Use in Women During the Perinatal Period

Which women should be screened?

When should they be screened?

What substances should they be screened for?
Considerations with Regard to Screening for Substance Use in Women During the Perinatal Period

How should women be screened?

What are the consequences of screening?

What screening instruments should be used?
Who Should Be Screened?

- **Should screening be limited to some “high risk groups”?**
  - Pregnant women with a history of substance use prior to pregnancy
  - Pregnant adolescents
  - Clinics with women of color or lower socioeconomic groups

- **The case of Pinellas County, Florida**
  - 15.4% of white women and 14.1% of black women were positive for a substance when urine was tested
  - The rate of reporting was 10-fold higher for black than white women despite similar rates of positive screens
  - Poverty was a predictor of reporting

When to Screen?
Time to Abstinence Differs Across Pregnancy

- Early screening will lead to higher rates of detection and can identify women who need assistance, but may also identify women who are likely to attain abstinence (quit a substance).

83% of all women were able to quit at least one substance. Pregnancy-related abstinence rates were high for all substances except cigarettes.

Screening for Substance Use in Pregnancy Using Biomarkers

- **Urine**: easily accessible, limited windows of detection, poor performance for alcohol
- **Blood**: extremely limited window of detection
- **Hair**: broad window of detection but expensive and can be influenced by hair treatments
- **Meconium**: broad window of detection but expensive, limited to postpartum period
- **Umbilical cord**: broad window of detection but expensive, limited to postpartum period
- **Saliva**: accessible but reliability issues

Meconium: first type of feces passed by a newborn infant
How Should Screening Be Conducted?
Screening Questionnaires vs Biological Assays

- **Questionnaires**
  - Have flexible screening windows, e.g., prior week, month, year, duration of pregnancy
  - Can ask about substances that may not be included on a urine or other test
  - Can promote dialogue between patients and health care providers
  - Are inexpensive

- **Questionnaires can lead to false negative results, particularly for substances that are highly stigmatized (such as opiates)**
Which Screening Instruments Should Be Used?

- Few screening instruments have been evaluated for use among pregnant women, and most studies have not been replicated
  - CRAFFT (Car, Relax, Alone, Forget, Family/Friends, Trouble)
    - Example question: Do you ever use alcohol or drugs while you are by yourself, alone?
  - 4Ps/4Ps plus/5 Ps (Parents, Partner, Past, Pregnancy)
    - “Plus” question: Have you ever drunk beer, wine, or liquor?
  - Wayne Indirect Drug Use Screener
    - Example true or false statement: In the past year I have smoked at least 100 cigarettes.
  - Substance Use Risk Profile-Pregnancy (SURP-P)
    - Example question: In the month before you knew you were pregnant, how much beer, wine, or liquor did you drink?

Three-site study that will assess 1,200 pregnant women
- Yale, Wayne State (Detroit), Massachusetts General Hospital

Step 1: Pregnant women are administered 5 screening questionnaires

Step 2: Participants are assured of confidentiality, asked about comprehensibility and comfort with questions, and invited to provide a urine sample to test for a range of substances

Step 3: Performance characteristics (e.g., sensitivity, specificity) for questionnaires will be compared; multivariable analysis will be used to build a new predictive measure
### Number of Positive Urine Tests by Study Site

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Site</th>
<th>Total Participants</th>
<th>Total Positive Tests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yale</td>
<td>N=180</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wayne State</td>
<td>N=96</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MGH</td>
<td>N=27</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Unpublished data

- **MGH**: Massachusetts General Hospital
- **Cotinine**: Predominant metabolite of nicotine, used as a biomarker for exposure to tobacco smoke
- **THC**: Tetrahydrocannabinol (principal psychoactive ingredient in marijuana)
Treatment

- For pregnant women with opiate addiction, the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommends maintenance therapy.
  - Maintenance therapy includes buprenorphine or methadone.
    * As part of comprehensive treatment, results in fewer obstetric complications.
    * In one study, buprenorphine-exposed neonates required 89% less morphine to treat NAS, a 43% shorter hospital stay, and a 58% shorter duration of medical treatment.

- Screening and Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) can lead to decreased use of other substances (e.g., nicotine and alcohol).

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2005. ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK64148/
Summary

- We still do not know the best approach to screening for substance use in pregnancy, but comparative research is underway.
- Both biologic tests and self-report may underestimate the magnitude of the problem.
  - Concerns about legal implications of positive screens or tests.
- Efforts should be made to avoid stigmatization by not focusing on particular racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic populations.
- Detection of substance use in pregnancy should be coupled with assistance in obtaining treatment.
Using Hospital, State, and Federal Policies to Improve Care to Families Affected by NAS

Stephen W. Patrick, MD, MPH, MS
Assistant Professor, Pediatrics and Health Policy, Division of Neonatology
Vanderbilt University School of Medicine
Improving Outcomes for Women and Infants

- Responses to the prescription opioid epidemic have often not explicitly included pregnant women and infants
- Evidence base for clinicians, hospitals, along with federal and state governments is lacking
- Hospitals and states vary greatly in their approaches to women with opioid use disorder and infants with NAS
- Coordinated, “system-wide” approaches are needed to optimize outcomes for this vulnerable population
Hospital Variability in NICU Care

- NAS now accounts for 50% of NICU hospital days in some hospitals
- There is significant inter- and intra-hospital variation in treatment and outcomes for NAS
- Recent studies of U.S. children’s hospitals indicate:
  - Two-fold differences in risk-adjusted length of stay
- Large international quality improvement collaborative of 199 hospitals
  - 44.8% had a policy to standardize scoring
  - 48.6% had a policy on breastfeeding a substance-exposed infant
  - 68.0% had a policy on pharmacologic treatment of NAS
Morphine and methadone are the recommended first-line treatment for infants with NAS.
Standardizing Care Results in Shorter Treatment Courses and Hospital Stays

- **Ohio perinatal collaborative, multicenter cohort**
  - Weaning from opioids according to protocol vs. without a protocol results in shorter length of treatment
    (17.7 vs. 32.1 days, p<0.001)

  - Participating hospitals, care standardized by protocol or policy development
    - Shortened length of treatment from 16 days to 15 days (p=0.02)
    - Shortened length of stay from 21 days to 19 days (p=0.002)
  - Hospitals with protocols or policies focused on infant symptom scoring had lowest length of stay
    - 3.1 days (95%CI –4.9, –1.4)

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States vary in their approach to substance exposure in pregnancy

- One state allowed for criminal prosecution (Tennessee)
- 18 states consider it child abuse
- 12 states prioritize pregnant women for treatment

Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act

- Passed in 1974, reauthorized in 2010
- States vary in implementation
Tennessee: Criminal Justice vs. Public Health

- **Safe Harbor Act of 2013**
  - “…ensure that family-oriented drug abuse or drug dependence treatment is available…”
  - Treatment by 20th week → No prosecution, no child removal just for history of drug misuse

- **Public Chapter 820, 2014**
  - A woman can be charged with a misdemeanor if she illegally uses narcotics during pregnancy and if the baby is harmed as a result (e.g., neonatal abstinence syndrome)
    - Law expired in July 2016

- **Punitive approaches to substance use in pregnancy are ineffective and may lead to women avoiding medical care**
EPIDEMIC: RESPONDING TO AMERICA’S PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE CRISIS
White House Plan

Education
- Parents, youth, and patients
- Requiring prescribers to receive education on the appropriate and safe use, and proper storage and disposal, of prescription drugs including opioids

Monitoring
- Every state recommended to have a Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP)
- Work towards sharing and exchanging prescribing data between states (interoperability)
- Evidence suggests PDMP implementation associated with reduction in overdose deaths
  - More frequent data updates, more types of controlled drugs monitored yield greater reductions

White House Plan

➢ Proper Medication Disposal
  ● Develop convenient and environmentally responsible prescription drug disposal programs to help decrease the supply of unused prescription drugs in the home
    □ Drug Enforcement Agency National Take-Back Initiative
    □ 2014 rule to enable take back

➢ Enforcement
  ● Provide law enforcement with the tools necessary to eliminate improper prescribing practices and stop “pill mills”

deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug_disposal/takeback/
Government Accountability Office: 
Prenatal Opioid Use and NAS

- NIH research funding from 2008–2013 was $21.6 million
  - 2012 costs for hospital charges alone: $1.5 billion

- 14 federal programs provide direct services

- Coordination of HHS-wide efforts is needed
  - “...there is a risk that federal efforts may be duplicated, overlapping, or fragmented.”

NIH: National Institutes of Health
HHS: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
gao.gov/products/GAO-15-203
Protecting Our Infants Act, 2015

➢ Requests that HHS:
  ● Review and improve coordination in HHS
  ● Develop a strategy to address gaps in research and federal programs
  ● Study and develop recommendations for preventing and treating prenatal opioid use and NAS
  ● Improve data and public health response by supporting states and tribes

➢ Signed by President Obama in November 2015
Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2016

- **Highlights:**
  - Broad approach to prevention, expansion of treatment inclusive of pregnant women and children
  - National All Schedules Prescription Electronic Reporting (NASPER) Reauthorization
  - Improving Treatment for Pregnant and Postpartum Women
  - GAO report on NAS
  - Infant Plan of Safe Care

- **Signed by President Obama in July 2016; however, to date, not fully funded**
Additional Federal Policy Efforts

- **Food and Drug Administration (FDA)**
  - 2013 ER/LA opioids black box warning
  - 2016 IR opioids black box warning

- **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)**
  - Guidelines for management of opioid use disorder in pregnancy and infants with NAS released this month

**Black-box warning:** appears on a prescription drug’s label, designed to call attention to serious or life-threatening risks
Public Health Approach to NAS

- **Primary Prevention**
  - Access to contraception
  - Responsible prescribing
  - Tobacco cessation
    - Tobacco combined with opioid use increases risk of NAS

- **Secondary Prevention**
  - Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment

- **Tertiary Prevention**
  - Decrease variability in treatment
  - Prevent readmission

Moving Towards NAS Prevention

| Pre-Pregnancy | Prenatal | Birth | Neonatal | Childhood and Beyond |

NAS Treatment Focuses on Birth
NAS Prevention Across the Life Course

- Public health systems to prevent opioid dependency
  - Prescription drug monitoring programs
  - Access to treatment

- Decrease proportion of unplanned pregnancies among women who abuse opioids (86%)
NAS Prevention Across the Life Course

- Identify substance use disorders in pregnancy
- Decrease overprescribing in pregnancy
- Evaluate co-morbidities in pregnancy (e.g., infectious, psychiatric)
  - Substance use may increase risk for hepatitis C
- Identify targets to reduce risk (harm reduction) for mother and infant
NAS Prevention Across the Life Course

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<tr>
<th>Pre-Pregnancy</th>
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- Improve identification of at-risk infants
- Decrease transfers to tertiary care facilities, improve and sustain treatment in the community
- Improve care standardization and decrease variability
# NAS Prevention Across the Life Course

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- Decrease readmission risk
- Understand long-term risks
- Find modifiable risks
  - Long medication tapers
  - Risk of developmental delay
Summary

- Clinical and policy approaches to opioid use disorder and NAS have been variable and not always supported by evidence.

- Progress is being made at all levels of government and the health care system in understanding opioid use disorder and NAS.

- Future efforts to improve care for women with opioid use disorder and infants with NAS should be grounded in public health principles.
Turn the Tide: Surgeon General’s Call to End the Opioid Crisis

1783 have taken the pledge

BE THE SOLUTION. JOIN THE MOVEMENT.

join now
turthetiderx.org
Primary Prevention and Public Health Strategies to Prevent Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome