

ANOTHER "DRUG BABY" MEDIA SCARE?

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Recently (July 27, 2005), Medical News Today (MNT) carried a story with the alarming title, "Single prenatal dose of meth causes birth defects." Join Together, a prominent website, published a summary of the story with a similar headline and opening with the possibly more inflammatory, "Pregnant women who use methamphetamine even once put their unborn children at risk of birth defects" (July 29, 2005). **These headlines misleadingly imply that the research involved women when it actually involved mice, and both the original story and the Join Together summary failed to mention that this animal research may have little if any bearing on the health outcome of humans prenatally exposed to methamphetamines...**

Animal research has always been critical for understanding human problems... But there are also limits to applying animal findings to humans.

This is one of the lessons we learned from the hype that surrounded the media-created "crack baby" of the 1980s. The media was quick to report early animal studies suggesting that prenatal exposure to cocaine caused serious and irreversible defects in children. The first round of human studies also predicted dire consequences. But these studies were preliminary and flawed. The results of larger, well-controlled studies failed to find any of the serious defects or malformations shown by the early animal studies or human studies...

Nevertheless, in response to this alarmist reporting, our nation became very angry with mothers who used cocaine during pregnancy and wanted them punished for harming their unborn child. Mothers were prosecuted instead of being offered treatment, and record numbers of children were removed from their biological mothers overburdening an already overburden foster-care system...

But what does this kind of animal research tell us about human babies? That question was addressed in March 2005 by a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services expert panel reviewing the literature on methamphetamine. They concluded that this kind of mouse study -- that uses direct injection into the peritoneum -- is not relevant to humans because pregnant women don't inject the drugs they are dependent upon into the peritoneum -- the membrane that surrounds the fetuses they are carrying...

The entire article is at www.jointogether.org/y/0,2521,578073,00.html

Common Sense for Drug Policy
www.CommonSenseDrugPolicy.org www.DrugWarFacts.org
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