Monitoring the Risk of Binge Drinking in Childbearing-age Women

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**Introduction**

- Wisconsin continues to have the highest prevalence of binge drinking in the country.
- Fetal exposure to alcohol can have numerous consequences, including a range of conditions collectively termed as fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD).
  - Include physical, mental, behavioral, and learning disabilities, which are often permanent.
  - Entirely preventable if alcohol consumption during pregnancy is avoided.
- Substantial prenatal alcohol exposure can occur before a woman is aware of being pregnant.

**Methods**

- Data: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS)
  - 1990 to 2005 Wisconsin and National data on binge drinking among women aged 18-44.
  - Estimated the risk of frequent/binge drinking using logistic regression.
    - Women of childbearing potential: sexually active women aged 18-44 who have not had a hysterectomy.
    - Controlling for age, education level, race/ethnicity, marital status, and use of contraception.
  - Frequent/binge drinking is defined as ≥7 drinks per week or ≥5 drinks on an occasion within the past 30 days.

**Results**

**Trends in Binge Drinking**

- Prevalence in Wisconsin significantly higher than in the U.S. and slightly higher than in the Nine-county region between 1990 and 2005.
  - Recent decreasing trend in Wisconsin and the Nine-county region.

**Estimated Risk of Frequent/Binge Drinking**

- In all locations, married women and African-American women had the lowest risk of frequent/binge drinking, and 20-29 year-olds had the highest risk.
- Women who reported using contraception had a higher risk of frequent/binge drinking compared to those not using contraception in all locations.
- Women with high school or some college education had a 40% greater risk of frequent/binge drinking compared to college-educated women in Wisconsin and the nine counties, but not in the U.S.

**Discussion**

**Conclusions**

- Childbearing-age women in Wisconsin and the Nine-county region had significantly higher levels of binge drinking than in the U.S.
- Women aged 21-29 years were mostly likely to engage in frequent/binge drinking, after controlling for contraception.
- Women at risk due to frequent/binge drinking were at lower risk of pregnancy (and having a child with FASD) due to higher rates of contraceptive use.

**Limitations**

- Women without land-line home telephones are excluded from the BRFSS sample, and data is self-reported (possible underreporting of risky behaviors, i.e. binge drinking and inconsistent use of contraception).