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USING FAS AND DAS SIMULATORS TO FACILITATE STUDENT PERCEPTIONS AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE ON PRENATAL DEVELOPMENT

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Alcohol consumption and drug abuse during pregnancy can have numerous adverse health consequences for the developing fetus, including fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) and teratogenic effects, increased morbidity and mortality, a high incidence of birth defects and motor damage. There has been a dearth of evidence looking at educating women about prenatal health, nutrition and risk taking behaviors like excessive alcohol consumption or taking drugs prenatally. There has been a growth in anti-natal classes teaching a more holistic approach to parenting including risky behavior impact on neonates. There has also been a growing body of research looking at the use of IDIs (interactive digital technologies) such as the virtual baby project to educate teenagers about sexual health and parenting skills. However, there is limited research combining the use of the virtual baby doll versions to educate the public about the impact of risk taking behavior (alcohol and drug abuse) postnatally on the neonate. This research aims to address this gap in the research by using the fetal alcohol and drug affected simulator dolls to educate a sample of psychology undergraduates about taking part in risk-taking behaviors when involved sexually and the impact these behaviors have on the neonate. This research investigates the possibility of socio-technical change by using technology as the mechanism of empowerment to make healthier choices and reduce the likelihood of taking up drugs and alcohol during pregnancy.