

Infant Mortality & Safe Sleep in American Indian Communities: Building on Research to Improve Health

Presenter:

Deane Around Him, DrPH, ScM

Policy Research Center

National Congress of American Indians

(605) 441-3615

daroundhim@ncai.org

Presentation Objectives

- Describe the hypothesized association between prenatal alcohol exposure and the risk for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and adverse pregnancy outcomes.
- Identify factors that contribute to the sleep environment of infants in some American Indian communities.
- Discuss future research directions related to physiological and behavioral mechanisms of infant safe sleep.

Highlights

Mechanisms Underlying SIDS Remain Unclear, But Promising Research Exists

- *The Safe Passage Study*, a large NIH-funded cohort study, stands to shed light on the role of prenatal alcohol exposure in the risk for SIDS and other outcomes.
- The hypothesized mechanisms includes possible environmental (alcohol, substance, nutrition, psychosocial) and/or genetic modifiers of the placental functioning or nervous system regulatory processes that result in SIDS, Stillbirth, and FASD outcomes.

Moving from Research to Practice Takes Time and Commitment

- Progress has been made to reduce infant mortality in American Indian communities, but the issue persists and involves complex cultural and behavioral aspects related to the sleep environment.
- Culturally-informed and –relevant curriculums are needed to engage families in meaningful dialogue that will result in reduced risk in infant sleep environments.

Resources

- Healthy Native Babies Project: https://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/Pages/pubs_details.aspx?pubs_id=5733
- 1,000 Grandmothers Project: <http://iasquared.org/wordpress2/what-we-do/current-projects/1000-grandmothers/>