**PAPER NUMBER #325**

**Omega-3 for the Prevention of Preterm Birth: Opportunities and Challenges of Implementation**

**Presenting Authors**

Dr Jamie de Seymour, Lucy Simmonds, and Associate Professor Philippa Middleton

**Affiliation**

Healthy Mothers, Babies and Children, South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute

**Country of residence**

Australia

**Objectives/aims**

Preterm birth (<37 weeks’ gestation) is associated with many adverse short and long-term health outcomes, and substantial costs to the public health system. Related complications are the leading cause of death for children under 5 years of age. The aim of our Medical Research Future Fund translation project is to implement appropriate and targeted uptake of omega-3 fatty acids by pregnant women. Omega-3 is one of the very few interventions shown to reduce preterm birth.

**Methods**

This project used evidence from a Cochrane review of omega-3 supplementation in pregnancy to update clinical practice guidelines. In parallel, we are working with an industry partner to develop a minimally invasive, rapid method to measure omega-3 status and identify women most likely to benefit from supplementation. Throughout the development and delivery of our implementation strategy, stakeholders were actively engaged using focus groups with pregnant women, market research, and presentations to relevant community and health professional groups.

**Main findings**

The Cochrane review found omega-3 supplementation in pregnancy can reduce risk of very preterm birth (<34 weeks) by 42%. Existing work indicates conflicting barriers and enablers eg. mercury content as a barrier to fish intake, whereas supplementation is seen as an “insurance policy” to ensure healthy pregnancy. These considerations have informed development of messaging to pregnant women, health professionals, and supplement industry. Our implementation strategies include working with stakeholders to ensure quality and dose of omega-3, environmental sustainability, and accurate health claims.