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Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

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Preface

In October 2009, the Institute of Health Economics (IHE) staged a consensus development conference to address key questions about the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). Experts in the field presented scientific evidence to a “jury” about prevention and the social determinants that may induce drinking during pregnancy, the importance of diagnosis, the impact of FASD across a person’s lifespan, and the community supports needed for those living with FASD, as well as their families. After two days of hearings, the jury developed a statement which answered eight relevant and common questions about FASD, including suggested policy changes for enhanced prevention, and for improving the lives of people with FASD and their families. That statement is available in the Appendix of this book.

During the planning of that conference, IHE invited the experts—who included researchers, clinicians, economists, epidemiologists, social workers, and judicial workers—to expand on their speeches and write chapters for a book that would aim at a worldwide health policy-making audience. An overwhelming majority of the speakers were interested, and this book is the result of their hard work.

In addition to policy makers, this book is for anyone interested in FASD, including those with the condition, family members and other caregivers, researchers, clinicians and others in healthcare and social services, and the justice sector. The chapters describe the impact of FASD on the individual, their families and society, and the many complex issues involved in the condition’s prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. The book ends with personal accounts of life with FASD, written by Myles Himmelreich and Charlene Organ, that not only powerfully illustrate the challenges created by having FASD, but also serve as a reminder that FASD does not—and should never—define a person.

We would like to acknowledge the Government of Alberta FASD Cross-Ministry Committee, Canada Northwest FASD Partnership, Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada for their financial support of the consensus development conference and the production of material to this book. We would also like to thank Minister Janis Tarchuk, who was Minister of Children and Youth Services at the time of the conference and Deputy Minister, Fay Orr, for their strong support. Special recognition should be given to Ms Denise Milne, who represented the Cross-Ministry Committee and assisted greatly in all aspects of the conference.
preparations. We are very grateful to the Honorable Anne McLellan for serving as Chair of the Jury for the conference, to Dr Gail Andrew, who acted as the Scientific Chair, and Ms Nancy Reynolds who acted as moderator. Special mention should be made to the Honorable Iris Evans, Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations for Alberta, who has been a tireless supporter of initiatives to improve the lives of those affected by FASD. We would also like to give special thanks to Gail Littlejohn for her support in the editing process of this publication.

On behalf of the Institute of Health Economics (IHE) (www.ihe.ca)

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