

News from the Western Cape Association for Infant Mental Health (WCAIMH): Nurturing the Nurturer

By Jeanine Beukes, Chairperson WCAIMH, South Africa

Following the wonderful conference in Cape Town, we were very aware of the degree of exhaustion that most carers of moms and babies (and some of the committee) were experiencing, so we focused our year on Nurturing the Nurturer.

Firstly, a little bit about our affiliate. Our official membership currently stands at 120 people and we have about 50 paid up members that regularly attend meetings in Cape Town. The governance is smoothly organized with a committee of 3 persons democratically elected for a 2 year term of office. Committee members can stand for re-election should they wish to and if they have the memberships' voted support. Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary are chosen following a voting system by the members. Our members are made up of approximately two-thirds longstanding and one third newer (joined in the last 1 or 2 years) members.

Secondly, keeping with our theme for the year, Nurturing the Nurturers, our WCAIMH monthly meetings have been richly informative, yet the tone gentle and supportive. Overall, they have embraced the themes of diversity, care and contribution. Diversity has been reflected in the wide range of professional backgrounds of the presenters and attendees. Care was especially captured in a sweet moment when Judith Davies (consultant child and adolescent psychotherapist) offered a bowl of sweets around to all of us as we were discussing maternal bereavement and loss. Furthermore, the subsequent current atmosphere that every-one has something of value to contribute, has resulted in a richer knowledge that is shared through the presentations and through the subsequent discussions and sharing of experiences. In turn, this knowledge has then been taken to a wider range of maternal-infant/professional interfaces.

Topics covered in our monthly meetings included:

- * Nurturing the baby by seeing the mother: Improving child outcomes through maternal mental health interventions. Presented by Dr Simone Honikman of the Peri-Natal Research Project (now in its 10th year).
- * Fussy Feeders: A multidisciplinary panel discussion. This was beautifully presented by Bea Wirz, Mush Perrins and Katherine Megaw.
- * Mentalization-based parenting psychotherapy for at-risk parents caring for young children. Presented by Prof Suchman.
- * The Grandmaternal Transference. Presented by Dr Nicola Dugmore.
- * How can you both Love and Hate your baby?: Addressing ambivalence in the parent-infant relationship. Presented by authors Greg Fried and Lisa Lazarus of "The Book Of Jacob" fame.
- * The Impact of loss and bereavement on early parenthood. Presented by Judith Davies and then followed by cross cultural experiences of loss as shared by the Parent Centre.

An ongoing challenge for our affiliate is striking some balance between keeping the presentations of a high academic standard while allowing accessibility of knowledge to a mixed group of professionals. We strive to uphold research/academic quality (with its impact on the community) while keeping the material practical.

Thirdly, I would like to offer some reflections on our WAIMH congress experiences and reflect on our post congress work in terms of recent projects and connectedness across infant mental health workers. At the outset, our heartfelt congratulations are expressed for the smooth running of the Cape Town 2012 conference. The technical support was of superb quality and presentations were easy to hear and see. I was very impressed with the short video clips by

each presenter giving the core abbreviated version of their talk. It was difficult to make choices as to whom to attend in 2012 and the new speakers found it hard to have a voice.

In addition, the pre-conference workshops offered inspired people at grass roots level. The financial benefit of the conference has also allowed our affiliate to support a community project for the first time that has taken the form of an ongoing support for a Mothers' support group in a disadvantaged community initiated by The Parent Centre. Members of the multi-disciplinary team have visited new and at-risk mothers at their homes on an ongoing basis and have used a great deal of initiative when faced with external challenges like flooding and issues of personal safety. We remain open to financially assisting other organizations that directly serve the community and will serve to contain and hold the carers.

On the other hand, it was generally felt by our current committee that the conference did not bring together the Cape Town infant mental health community in any noticeable way. Individual sponsorships empowered certain individuals, and was of great encouragement to them, but our affiliate as an organization has not been greatly impacted by the input. However, it's early days yet and seeds planted will take a while to grow. We are aware of the need to monitor growth and to stand by with early growing pains.

Fourthly, I want to reflect on our grass roots activities in conjunction with the WAIMH initiative regarding infant rights. It is so good to be part of a vibrant umbrella body like WAIMH. Armed with your recent provisional proposed Charter of Baby's Rights, issues regarding withholding soothing have already been highlighted in our local media- In both English and Afrikaans magazines. There are invitations issued to our committee to contribute, coming from journalists, as we are being recognized as an advocate for the emotional wellbeing of babies.

As always we have to tread carefully and gently and make baby steps in new and kinder ways of nurturing, as we advocate Babies' rights and the anticipated controversy. This has been in line with our committee's decision that the general public needed to be made more aware of the maternal-infant issues on the ground and the valuable research-work combinations that are currently taking place.

Furthermore, our current committee is looking at a 2014 meeting on Infant and Carers' Rights (advocacy role) and how these can be supported. A stand addressing the same topic at the local Baby Expo is also being investigated by the committee. Again knowing that we are well supported by the parent-umbrella body of the WAIMH makes the task of tackling and gently shaking rigid parental practices, less daunting.

Finally, I also reflect on the ongoing challenge for local affiliate members to experience a meaningful connection with WAIMH. For example, by having opportunities at the WAIMH congresses to present about local affiliate work. Unfortunately, our goal of doing this at the up-coming Edinburgh congress will not be realized as the proposed work for presentation was downgraded to a poster presentation. Hopefully we can regroup and present at the next conference. Furthermore, some committee members have the feeling of not being that well linked to WAIMH, but on our side we also need to make the effort to make connections with WAIMH. WAIMH's website and newsletters are really important in this respect. Amidst these challenges, as always, the knowledge that we are not alone is what brings Hope-to these beleaguered mothers, to the carers, and finally, the committee in Cape Town.

In sum, we are looking forward to closely working with WAIMH and Affiliates in the coming year and wish the organizing and scientific committee great patience and wisdom as we march toward the Edinburgh conference.

WAIMH 2014 Congress: Two Affiliate Events

Live Reflective Supervision: Meeting a baby and his family through the experience of live supervision

This workshop (conducted over two sessions) offers delegates an experience of live and real-time supervision. Reflective Supervision is a cornerstone for enhancing a practitioner's effective work with infants, very young children and their families. Reflective supervision focuses on: "the shared exploration of the emotional content of infant and family work as expressed in relationships between parents and infants, parents and practitioners, and supervisors and practitioners" (Weatherston & Barron, 2009, p. 63). Following a brief introduction to the concept of reflective supervision, a live supervision session (approximately 60 minutes) will be conducted. This will involve two senior infant mental health practitioners, respectively, taking the role of supervisor and supervisee. They will engage in a reflective partnership concerning a current clinical intervention with an infant and his/her family, through discussing detailed clinical material. The supervision session will be followed by a facilitated group reflection on the supervision experience and process. This workshop is suitable for anyone who works with infants, toddlers and their families. It is specifically offered in response to educational needs expressed by the Affiliates of WAIMH who have requested learning opportunities about Reflective Supervision in conjunction with opportunities for therapeutically-oriented discussions, to bring back to their communities.

Session 1 (June 14, 8.30 – 10.00 am).

Senior clinician acting as supervisor:

Dr Louise Emanuel (Phd) is a Consultant Child & Adolescent Psychotherapist at the Tavistock & Portman NHS Foundation Trust. She is the Under Five Lead for Camden Services in the Child and Family Department. She is Course Organiser for the PGdip/MA in Infant Mental Health (M9), teaches on the clinical training for

child psychotherapists, and she has been the co-convenor of the Infant Mental Health Workshop for many years. She also has an interest in work with fostered and adopted children, children with learning disabilities, and consultation to organisations. She has numerous publications in the infant field and she has notably co-edited the book "What can the matter be? Therapeutic Interventions with Parents, Infants and Young Children, Emanuel, L. & Bradley, E. eds. (2008) London, Karnac Books. She has lectured in South Africa, Brazil, Taiwan, Australia, Israel, Holland - and taught on observational and clinical courses in Florence and Athens.

Senior clinician presenting case material and acting as supervisee:

Ms Patricia O'Rourke (BA, MGuidCouns, GradDipIMH)

Patricia O'Rourke is a Child Psychotherapist and Psychodramatist. She has worked as a consultant, supervisor and trainer in the public and private sectors in Australia and New Zealand. For the past ten years she has provided individual and group reflective supervision to infant mental health workers from a range of organisations and settings. She is particularly interested in child protection and preventative work with infants, toddlers and their families and she co-ordinates the Infant Therapeutic Reunification Service in the Department of Psychological Medicine, Women's and Children's Hospital, Adelaide. She is currently completing a PhD researching how mothers look at their newborns and whether this can be characterised to assist earlier intervention.

Session 2 (June 14, 12.30 - 2.00 pm)

Senior clinician acting as supervisor:

Pamela Segel (Ed.S, DS III (Developmental Specialist), IMH-E-IV(Mentor/Clinical) is an Early Childhood developmental specialist.