

President's Perspective

By Antoine Guedeney



Cape Town, 2011

This will be a major event for WAIMH! We very much want to make it a success with a large audience coming from all over the world to meet with our South African colleagues. Much is at stake since it will be our first World Congress in Africa. The goal is to increase our membership and influence there, and to develop training and research exchanges, through a very active South African WAIMH affiliate. We expect the audience to be around 600 people. We very much hope that all WAIMH members and affiliates will be represented.

Palvi Kaukonen, Kaja Puura and I made a site visit to Capetown just before Easter where we met with Astrid Berg and Mark Tomlinson, the leaders of the South African WAIMH affiliate, and with the conference organizer (CO). We attended an infant mental health day in the children's hospital, organized by Astrid Berg, which gathered 90 people from all over South Africa.

Cape Town is just fantastic. It is really Africa's Riviera, plus the warm African welcome and easy way of getting in touch!

It is very safe, with the congress site and hotels just by the seaside or within 5 minutes from the waterfront. We will have the best venue we ever had in a large convention building with a lot of light and space, opening directly on the Table Mountain. Weather at this time of the year is just fine with extraordinary crystal clear light and cool temperature. Organization by local Conference Organizer Deborah McTarr is precise and we will have lunches included on the spot. Of course social programs will include many possibilities: to watch the Big Five (the great wild animals), go to the famous vineyards by the Cape, or to the Victoria Falls. We will have a great gala dinner outside of town.

But the main reason, apart from making a lifetime trip to South Africa, is that what is going on in South Africa related to infant mental health taps directly into our main WAIMH goals. South Africa has been and still is experiencing major societal and political changes. The economy is thriving, but there are many inequalities as well. Immigration from other nearby African countries is huge, with 10,000 immigrants arriving each month. Violence is a major concern, between and within communities. The HIV rate of infection is high. Studies and interventions are very active and provide us with data and propositions that are very welcome to more developed countries that are faced with financial restrictions on the health and prevention systems.

Another reason for attending is that we will be implementing in Cape Town a new frame for exchanges on training during our congresses. There will be a pre-congress training village in the only hospital (Red Cross Memorial) dedicated to children in Africa. We will then have our regular pre-congress day. In Cape Town, the board will meet and new people will step in; we will prepare for the next congress in Scotland and we will have chosen a stable CO, which should save us time and money. The affiliates will meet and share the results of the surveys actively launched by their representatives, Marin St André and Mary Folee. We will talk about how WAIMH can react and help when catastrophic events occur, such as earthquakes in New Zealand and in Japan.

The Program committee PC has put up a fantastic program. We have a lot to do, to share and to enjoy with one another. So get prepared now and I will see you in Cape Town.

Best wishes

Antoine Guedeney



13th World Congress

of the World Association for Infant Mental Health

Babies in Mind – the Minds of Babies: A View from Africa

Cape Town, South Africa

Cape Town International Convention Centre 17 - 21 April 2012



WORLD ASSOCIATION FOR
INFANT MENTAL HEALTH