



**Western Cape Association
for Infant Mental Health**



Message from WCAIMH Chair

As the country prepares for an easing in lockdown restrictions, it is likely that you may be making a return to more face to face consultations and have increased contact with infants and parents.

Personally, I recently returned to my office after a period of study leave, and I found the transition to be quite stressful and challenging in (at times) unexpected ways. I have needed reminders to remain patient with myself as I navigate this new phase and have needed to take greater care of my physical and mental health in order to maintain a sense of wellbeing. In the days and weeks to come, may you also be reminded of Robert Brault's definition of an optimist as "Someone who figures that taking a step backward after taking a step forward is not a disaster, it's a cha-cha".

We were grateful to have received positive feedback on last month's newsletter from many of you and therefore have developed this month's newsletter as a follow up to include additional resources. Holding in mind that much of the information on the subject of Covid-19 has reached you in the form of written pieces we have sourced information in podcast and video format. Also included in this month's newsletter is news about WAIMH and WCAIMH's membership. There has been some responses to our survey about clinicians willing to provide online treatments and if you have not yet done so, please feel free to complete the survey, which can be found [here](#) so that your details may be added to our list. As always, we invite you to make contact with us via our [Facebook](#) page, or via email.

Resources

Pregnancy in the Time of Covid-19

There is increased concern about the impact of Covid-19 on maternal mental health and a number of studies that have now emerged to track the mental health and overall wellbeing of these women. Initially, the surge of information in this group centred on their physical health. Women who are pregnant during this time face concerns about increased vulnerability to become infected by Covid-19, the health of their new-born and entering the healthcare system where Covid-19 contact is a real possibility. What has come to light is the added burden facing this group's mental health which include coping with the loss of an emotionally "normal" pregnancy, being isolated from family and larger social circles, financial troubles and having limited help and support. In severe cases they might develop post-traumatic stress (PTSD) in response.

The call for all mental health care workers during this time is to “provide support and intervene early and create an environment where pregnant women can get the care they need to get through this unique situation.”

- *The following podcast by Dr Simone Schwank addresses some of the challenges that face pregnant women: <https://www.podbean.com/eu/pb-7fyvn-d99341>.*

How to support yourself and your children during the Covid-19 outbreak

The Centre on the Developing Child from Harvard University has developed a series of **Podcasts** available on their website. . The topics range from self-care, and community wellbeing to domestic violence and mental health in lockdown. There is also a useful **booklet** for parents with practical ways of supporting their young children and themselves during the pandemic, which includes hand-outs, videos and podcasts. We have attached the booklet to this email which includes the following links:

- 5 Steps for Brain-Building Serve and Return
<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/how-to-5-steps-for-brain-building-serve-and-return/>
- Serve and Return for Parents & Caregivers Hand-out
<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/5-steps-for-brain-building-serve-and-return/>
- Podcast: The Brain Architects: Serve and Return
<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/the-brain-architects-podcast-serve-and-return-supporting-the-foundation/>
- Video: Mini Parenting Master Class with Center Director Jack P. Shonkoff, M.D.
(UNICEF) <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/building-babies-brains-through-play-mini-parenting-master-class/>
- Smartphone Apps: Vroom (<https://www.vroom.org/>) and Kinedu
(<https://www.kinedu.com/>)

Families Under Pressure

There are several **video's** made available by the **Maudsley Charity** in collaboration with King's College London, aimed at supporting families under pressure. These short, informative videos provide supportive guidance to parents with the aims of helping them deal with difficult behaviour in their children and helping them to manage their child's negative emotions.

- *The videos may be found on <https://familiesunderpressure.maudsleycharity.org/>*

E-book: Birdie and the Virus

Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service have a range of resources for young children during a natural disaster. They have developed an **e-book** titled “Birdie and the Virus”, which is another great resource helping young children to understand Covi-19, social distancing and the role of medical staff. They also have a catchy song that encourages hand washing and covering coughs and sneezes.

- *The flipbook and song can be found here: [Birdie and the Virus](#)*

Masks for Children

As the lockdown restrictions move to level 3 and many children begin return to school parents may be wondering about protective equipment. The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendation is to wear “cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain.” However, it is extremely important to note that the CDC specifically states that “cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.” According to Nationwide Children’s resource guide, infants should not wear masks because:

- Baby’s airways are smaller, so breathing through a mask is even harder on them.
- Using a mask on an infant may increase the risk of suffocation. Masks are harder to breathe through. A snug fit will give them less access to air, and a loose fit will not provide much protection.
- If they are having a hard time breathing, infants are unable to take the mask off themselves and could suffocate.
- Older infants or young toddlers are not likely to keep the mask on and will likely try to remove it, as well as touch their face more.
- There are no N95 masks approved for young children

- *Safety measures for Coronavirus is a short video that explains in a child friendly way the importance of wearing a mask, and other protective measures for Covid-19*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TSkEwdzGbCA>

Upcoming events

The **IPCP** has two upcoming online events via Zoom planned. The first, **Infant Observation Remembered** will comprise 5 sessions of discussion with experienced clinicians who have published or teach infant observation in Cape Town. **Judy Davies** will preside and offer her commentary from her many years of experience teaching infant observation. These sessions start on the 2nd of June and will be held on Tuesday mornings, 11.30 to 12.45.

The second event will be a 5 week **supervision** course with **Judy Davies** for clinicians working with children and adolescents during Covid-19. These will commence on the 10th of June and will be held on Wednesday mornings, 11.30 to 12.45. Additional details for each of these events are available on the attached flyers.

News from WAIMH

Due to the Covid pandemic, the **WAIMH** biennial conference has been postponed, but will still be held in Brisbane from **23 – 27 June 2021**. For members of WAIMH and individuals registered for the 2020 conference, a series of three **webinars** are scheduled to take place on the theme **Keeping Infant Mental Health in Focus in Times of Crisis**.

Webinar 1 is hosted by AAIMH, AIMH UK and the Infant-Parent Trust UK on **Wednesday, 10 June at 10 AM** (SA time) and will be chaired by Campbell Paul from Melbourne. **Webinar 2**, hosted by WAIMH on **Thursday, 11 June at 10 AM** (SA time) will be chaired by Astrid Berg from Cape Town. The last **webinar**, also hosted by WAIMH takes place on **Thursday, 18 June at 0:00/12 AM** (SA time), again chaired by Campbell Paul from Melbourne.

The webinars will be recorded, and are planned to be available online for a time after the presentations via the WAIMH pages. These webinars promise to be an exciting opportunity to meet virtually with a range of experienced clinicians and maintaining the focus on infant mental health during this pandemic. Please follow this [link](#) for more information and members are able to access information on the topics and speakers here.

In the most recent publication of *Perspectives in Infant Mental Health*, our founding member, **Astrid Berg** published a fascinating article on the topic “**Diversity and the positive impact of culture and supporting families in context – A view from Africa**”. In the article, Astrid argues for maintaining a cultural perspective when observing parenting practices and family beliefs and values regarding child rearing. The concept of a developmental niche, consisting of the physical setting, customs of child care and the psychology of caregivers, provides a useful framework from which to understand the influence of culture on child development. The article explores a variety of indigenous cultural practices that influences caregiver attitudes and practices, such as *Ubuntu*, back carrying, and co-sleeping. She cautions against using western norms as the yardstick against which to measure non-western, in particular African practices and encourages clinicians to acquire a wider understanding of diverse cultures and the value of their practices. A thought provoking read, which can be accessed [here](#).

WAIMH recently conducted a **survey** of all affiliate organisations to better understand the unique contexts and challenges that the various affiliates experience and also to foster a closer relationship with member associations. The WCAIMH committee responded to this survey and a **summary** of their findings can be found [here](#). Maintaining an active membership base appears to not only be a difficulty for WCAIMH, but within other

affiliate organisations as well. Compared to 2019, we have noticed a significant decline in the number of WCAIMH members for 2020. We are cognisant of the significant financial impact that Covid and its sequelae have had (and will continue to have) on all households. With this in mind, the committee would like to propose that the subject of membership fees be an item for discussion at the 2020 AGM in order to have a broader discussion of how to increase membership, while maintaining the essence of what WCAIMH is. The survey highlighted a need for closer collaboration with WAIMH and a rethinking of how affiliate members groups maintain their affiliate status, especially where there are less than the minimum number of 10 members per local association, as is the case for WCAIMH.

We look forward to making contact with all of you via email or our Facebook page and will continue to provide updates on when the monthly talks will resume.

Warm regards,

Juané and the WCAIMH Committee