



WCAIMH October Newsletter

Dear members and friends of WCAIMH,

At our September meeting, Siobhán Sweeney shared with us the findings of her PhD study of the maternal subjectivities of mothers who live in scarcely-resourced Cape Town communities and who return to work after maternity leave. Her description of the psychoanalytic analysis of the maternal narratives and discussion of the circumstances that these mothers face, was very insightful and created much discussion. Further discussion of additional aspects of her research is planned for a future meeting. If you were unable to attend the meeting and am interested in viewing a recording of the meeting, please let us know and we will send you the link.

October meeting

We have the privilege of welcoming Brenda Cowley as our guest speaker at our October meeting. The title of her talk will be “The relational impact of fathers on Infant Mental Health” and we look forward to hearing more about her important work focussed on the critical role that fathers play in promoting the development of infant mental health.

Brenda Cowley is an experienced educational psychologist, with an MPhil degree in Infant Mental Health, which she obtained cum laude. She currently works with caregivers and their infants or



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toddlers in her private practice. Brenda has a special interest in the crucial role that fathers can play in enhancing the healthy development of their infants.

Date: 21 September 2021

Time: 7pm

Platform: Zoom invitation

The session is **free** for members who will receive the link to the meeting via email.

Non-members are welcome to join at a cost of R60.

Account name: WCAIMH Standard Bank, Rondebosch

Account number: 274916401, Branch code: 051001

Please use your name and surname as a reference and email proof of payment to

wcaimhza@gmail.com

We would like to kindly request that you do an EFT, and not a bank deposit. Contact us if you cannot do an EFT and we can make alternative arrangements.

World Mental Health Day – 10 October

Around the world, World Mental Health Day was celebrated last Sunday on the 10th of October. This year, the theme was “Mental health in an unequal world”. There are many nuances to this theme, but strikingly, the focus on adult mental health needs far outweighs the attention paid to the mental health needs of under 3’s. With this in mind, we would like to highlight some resources and agencies who champion the needs of infants.

The **Parent-Infant Foundation** advocates for infants and families and supports specialist parent-infant relationship teams in the UK. The foundation recently published a report on the experiences of parents during the pandemic after surveying more than 5 000 families. The survey focussed on families’ experiences of lockdown during their babies’ first 1001 days, and the findings suggest that the impact of lockdown on some of these babies could be severe and may be long-lasting. The report is titled “Babies in lockdown” and some highlights include:

- Almost 7 in 10 found their ability to cope with their pregnancy or baby had been impacted as a result of COVID-19
- Nearly 7 in 10 felt the changes brought about by COVID-19 were affecting their unborn baby, baby or young child (with an increase in crying, tantrums and becoming more clingy). This was felt most sharply amongst parents under 25 years old and those on the lowest incomes
- One quarter (25%) of parents reported concern about their relationship with their baby and one third of these (35%) would like to get help with this.

For more information on the work of the Parent-Infant Foundation and to view the full report, please follow this link: <https://parentinfantfoundation.org.uk/our-work/campaigning/babies-in-lockdown/>

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The **Parent-Infant Research Institute (PIRI)** is a vigorous and innovative Australian research institute whose vision is to improve the emotional well-being of parents and to optimise infant development. PIRI provides a unique contribution to early intervention by combining basic research and clinical expertise to address depression and other difficulties facing parents and infants. The Institute is a leading body recognized internationally for its cutting-edge research into perinatal depression and anxiety and translating research to practice.

PIRI has conducted research in the areas of perinatal depression and prematurity since 2001. Some of their key findings are summarised below:

- A study on depression and the stress of parenthood showed that even when PND is treated effectively, this does not reverse the accompanying stress that mediates many of the negative effects of PND on the mother-infant relationship and ultimately infant development. A CBT treatment of PND improved maternal stress, but they highlighted the importance of taking into account the impact of PND on mother-infant interactions.
- Focussing on effective psychological treatments for PND, their randomised controlled trial compared cognitive therapy with less specialized psychological interventions. All were demonstrated as superior to conventional routine care. There are relatively few such studies and this one had the added strengths of a broad community sample, formal clinical diagnosis of depression, manualised interventions and well-validated rating instruments. They subsequently demonstrated that a specialised CBT program is at least as effective as treatment with antidepressant medication and can be successfully adapted for delivery by non-specialist health professionals.
- MumMoodBooster was developed as an online treatment for PND, and it was shown to have good usability, feasibility and clinical effectiveness. Poor uptake of traditional (face to face) treatment related to fear of stigma, poor accessibility of clinic-based programs and expense. Potential strengths of a Web-based intervention for PND are accessibility, privacy and low cost. The potential public health impact of Web-based treatment is therefore enormous given the birth rate in Australia. Their ongoing work continues to evaluate this validated internet intervention for postnatal depression by comparing it to traditional face-to-face psychological treatment. A large randomised controlled trial has been completed and is awaiting publication.
- A qualitative study investigated the beliefs and attitudes around seeking help among women who experienced PND. Findings suggest the lived experience of PND and associated attitudes and beliefs result in significant barriers to accessing help. Eight theme clusters were identified: expectations of motherhood; not coping and fear of failure; stigma and denial; poor mental health awareness and access; interpersonal support; baby management; help-seeking and treatment experiences and relationship with health professionals. Implications for improved identification and management include helping health professionals to be aware of the personal and societal barriers preventing mothers from acknowledging their

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distress. Media campaigns may also be helpful in challenging community views of PND, as well as highlighting the range of treatment options available to mitigate concerns over medical/pharmacological approaches.

For more information on the work done by the Parent-Infant Research Institute may be found here: <https://www.piri.org.au/>

Suzanne Maiello Workshop Series

Ububele is hosting a workshop series with world-renowned psychoanalyst and psychoanalytic child psychotherapist, **Susan Maiello**, titled **“Theatre of the Mouth”**. You can still join Susan Maiello online on the **13th of November** from **9h00 to 11h00**. The series focusses on oral issues as the 'scene' of early experience. Participants will have the opportunity to engage with Suzanne around clinical material on both a theoretical and technical level. For more information and to book tickets, please follow this link: [Suzanne Maiello](#)

UBUBELE

JOIN SUZANNE MAIELLO
FOR AN ONLINE WORKSHOP SERIES

"THEATRE OF THE MOUTH"

1st MEETING: 11th September
After birth, infant observation shows how central the newborn infant's experience of the mouth-nipple cooperation is - the primary realization of a dynamic connection between container and contained. The cavity of the mouth becomes the "scene" of early experiences of both inward- and outward-bound movements, of coming and going (with their psychic counterparts of projection/introjection), of presence and absence, of the emotional experiences connected with fullness and emptiness. An Ububele case will be presented for discussion.

2nd MEETING: 9th October
In this meeting we will explore a case where oral issues are so much in the foreground: feeding at the breast, babbling, rhythmical interaction with the mother, weaning and oral aggression. Discussions around case material will serve as a starting point to deepen the understanding of psychic distress expressed at the level of the "theatre of the mouth".

3rd MEETING: 13th November
Many forms of early disturbance are rooted and find their expression at the oral level: all kinds of eating disorders (excessive selectivity, anorexia, bulimia, vomiting, rumination), language disorders (mutism, logorrhea, ecolalia, non-verbal autistic withdrawal) (Tustin). Clinical material relevant to the theme of the "theatre of the mouth" will be discussed.

To book go to www.ububele.org
or email sable@ububele.org

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Membership

The annual fee to become a member of WCAIMH remains **R375**. Membership allows you access to all 10 talks throughout the year. The talks take place on the third Thursday of the month and 1 CPD point is earned for each talk attended. Membership also allows for active engagement with the process of appointing a WCAIMH committee, decisions taken by the association and ultimately an affiliation to the World Association of Infant Mental Health. We are hoping that many of you renew your membership this year and that we gain many new more members to allow us to bring you stimulating talks and provide members with new platforms to access resources and information.

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Keep in Touch

We welcome any feedback or suggestions. If there are specific topics of interest that you would like us to pursue for a speaker evening, or if you would like to nominate yourself or a colleague for our member highlight section, please also get in touch. Our contact details are:

Email: wcaimhza@gmail.com Website: www.infantmentalhealth.co.za

Facebook group:  Western Cape Association of Infant Mental Health