



Western Cape Association
for Infant Mental Health



Last month

Greetings to all members and friends of WCAIMH.

Our May speaker, **Dr. Nicola Dugmore** presented a wonderful reflection on the role of the nanny in Infant observation. This generated a lively discussion, in particular how our history has impacted the nanny's position within the family. Nicola reflected on the nanny as "Shadow mother" and how this influences the dynamic of the family and observation process.

Here is the reference to Nicola's article, published in *Infant Observation*:

Nicola Dugmore (2019). The presence of a 'nanny' in South African infant observations: learning opportunities and challenges for student observers and their teachers, *Infant Observation*,
DOI: 10.1080/13698036.2019.1571934

June speaker

We are pleased to announce our next talk on **Thursday 20 June** by **Liz Senior** who will be speaking on **Baby Stimulation, Interaction and the concept of Serve and Return**. Recent research shows that when it comes to play and interaction with babies, it's not **what** parents do to them, but **how** they interact with them that builds a better brain. This back and forth process, coined '**Serve and return**', between baby and caregiver is the most essential ingredient in shaping the architecture of the developing brain. By looking closely at how parents respond to their children, and ensuring they are actively engaged and responsive, parents can have a profound impact on their children's emotional, mental and physical health. The talk will cover:

- "Serve and return" interactions - What are they and what impact do they have on the developing brain.
- Sensory and motor experiences - What areas of development to consider and what activities encourage this development?
Occupational therapists Liz Senior and Kate Bailey have created a range of DVD's called Stimulate your Baby, which will be presented at the talk.

Liz Senior graduated from The University of Pretoria in 1985 as an occupational therapist. She is the founder and creator of Clamber Club, a sensory motor programme for children. Liz developed five key areas in Clamber Club: Baby classes, Toddler classes, Sports for schools classes, Party entertainment, and Playschool. She has also developed a range of English and Afrikaans Action Song music CDs and DVDs, including the recent 'Stimulate your Baby' educational DVDs. Clamber Club has 62 franchises country-wide. www.clamberclub.com

SA-ACAPAP feedback

The bi-annual **SA-ACAPAP** congress took place from 23 to 25 May in Johannesburg and saw the gathering of various disciplines interested in Child and Adolescent psychiatry. A WAIMH pre-congress symposium was convened by Prof. Astrid Berg with the theme “**The traumatized infant**”. The workshop brought to light different aspects of the ‘traumatized infant’, with each of the five presenters sharing a unique perspective on the physical, psychological and relational aspects of understanding and working with infants and their families who are burdened by trauma.

Prof. Astrid Berg opened the workshop with a general introduction to WAIMH, and highlighted its current focus on the world refugee crisis that has burdened families with trauma which has a profound impact on the developing brain of infants and young children. The chairperson of GAMIH, **Nicole Canin**’s talk focused on Jay Belsky’s work on “differential susceptibility” and she presented an argument for its implications in clinical work with at risk infants. Past WAIMH President, **Miri Keren** gave a fascinating account of her experiences in working with families of Eritrean refugees in Israel. Children in Israel qualify for health care, regardless of their immigration status, but not to their parents. This creates a chaotic situation, as treating traumatized infants mean also treating their traumatized parents. With this in mind, she has started an Infant Mental Health Clinic with UNITAF, where the whole family is included in treatment. She shared how normative Western child rearing practices imposes itself in a population already alienated in Israeli society. Her Infant Mental Health Team had to suspend all preconceived ideas of the mechanisms of attachment and make real connections with the families that they were seeing. **Katharine Frost** generously shared her experience in working with a traumatized mother-baby dyad at Ubulele. Her presentation included poignant excerpts from her sessions and pictures of a dyad whose relational history is riddled with violence, abandonment and exclusion. **Salisha Maharaj** brought into focus the impact of the traumatized mother on the infant, by alerting us to the levels of post-traumatic stress symptoms that are often missed in mothers of premature babies. She offered a formulation of how the mental representations of these mothers impact their babies and the way in which group sessions offered to these mothers mediate this impact.

www.infantmentalhealth.co.za



Membership

The annual fee to become a member of WCAIM remains **R375**

Banking information is as follows:

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 our treasurer, Barbara (b.kantor@iafrica.com).

Making contact

As always, we look forward to seeing you all again from **7:00 for 7:30pm on Thursday 20th of June** at the Outpatient Unit of the Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (DCAP), situated in 46 Sawkins Rd, Rondebosch, entrance in Liesbeek Rd. **Visitors** are always welcome and can pay a fee of R60 (in an envelope marked with your name please). We also encourage you to forward your name and car registration details to Salisha Maharaj for access to parking within the security area.

We always welcome any suggestions and feedback, please get in touch with us via **email** or via our **Facebook** page.