

The 14th WAIMH World Congress 14th-18th June 2014

The World Association of Infant Mental Health Congress convenes every 2 years, but this was the first time it has been held in Britain, and therefore relatively accessible. The aim of the Congress is to showcase the latest research and clinical expertise in this specialist field, to disseminate information, encourage networking and promote good practice. The congress attracted over 1400 delegates from 63 countries, with a packed 4 day programme of lectures, workshops, poster displays and master classes – a feast of information.

I had hoped to find out more about outcome measures, for both infant and parental functioning, so vital in the current climate of the NHs, and also to think more about strategies when working with parents, often who have fairly severe mental health difficulties. I wanted to come out with more ideas to help me write a local comprehensive bid for introducing infant mental health concepts to neonatal care and also think about child protection and safe practice when working on the edge in our high-risk client group. All of my aims were satisfied, although I am still digesting the huge amounts of information, re-reading notes, thinking and slowly ideas are connecting into hopefully a cohesive structure – rather like the brain development we try to foster.

I heard about the DABT –Distress Alarm Baby Scale, used and validated widely worldwide, but no one uses it in England. We tend to use amongst others the Brazelton Centre's NBO and NBAS, so I need to look further at the training, comparative strengths and weaknesses. I heard about The Emotional Availability Scales, measuring the reflective capacity of parents, many talks on the impact of a stay in NICU for the baby and parent, feeding difficulties in parents and infants, outcome measures, and even the use of humor in our work – so vital sometimes.

It felt a privilege to hear some of the “top names” in our field, with some wonderfully comprehensive keynote speakers. It was delightful to hear of the work and research of some very normal small services like the one I work in. It has generated many ideas to take forward, hopefully for the long-term benefit of our client group. As an added benefit, Edinburgh was hot. On asking for an iced coffee I was informed by the jolly lady behind the counter that they only had a few days like this a year and it wasn't worth investing in the ice machine!

I am very grateful to FPSA for their generosity in funding my attendance at this congress, which has been a wonderful opportunity. Thank you.

Please feel free to contact me if you require further information.

Kind Regards

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