BABY TALK

The Official Newsletter of the Ohio Association for Infant Mental Health

Winter 2002 Volume II: Issue 1

Notes From The President *by John Kinsel*

Welcome to Volume II: Issue 1 of Baby Talk! I hope you enjoy the articles and features we have for you this time around.

Rather than preview them for you in this space, as I did in Volume 1: Issue 1, I am instead going to share with you some of my thoughts on the impressions non-Infant Mental Health people have about Infant Mental Health.

Many of you have been fortunate enough to hear Marla Himmeger, the voice and force for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health at the Ohio Department of Mental Health, speak of her experiences. She often shares the "What?! Babies on couches?!!" response she gets when she mentions Infant Mental Health.

With all due respect to Marla, my own impression is that the public is much too sophisticated to always relate Mental Health to Freudian Psychoanalysis.

Here are some other responses to look for:

The Pavlov: "Babies with bells?"
The B. F. Skinner: "Babies in boxes?"
The Gestalt: "Do you use the 'empty crib' technique?"
The Adler: "Babies with lifestyles?"
The Maslow: "What do they have--a single level hierarchy? That's a straight line, not a pyramid!"
The Ellis: "Distorted baby thoughts?"
The Rogers: "What do you do--'goo' back? (Well, actually,…yes!)
The TA: "A baby has an inner child?"

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2nd Annual OAIMH Conference Held at Deer Creek

On Friday, November 9, 2001, sixty-nine folks interested in Infant Mental health, including 37 OAIMH members converged on the Lodge at Deer Creek State Resort and Recreational Area for OAIMH's Second Annual Infant Mental Health Conference.

Participants were treated to a review of recent research on Infants and fathers that has grown out of the national Early Head Start studies. Presenting this original material was Hiram Fitzgerald, General Secretary of The World Association of Infant Mental Health (of which OAIMH is an affiliate.) It was one time someone from Michigan was welcomed warmly so close to OSU!

Kate Merilees, Director of the Infant Intervention Program at Central Clinic in Cincinnati, guided the group in taking a closer look at toddlers and their very special mental health needs. Sources of anxiety for these explorers were identified so that protective steps can be taken to minimize anxious distress.

Following a nice lunch, OAIMH President John Kinsel took advantage of everyone staying for dessert and highlighted some of the challenges facing the Infant Mental Health Movement in Ohio in a time of shrinking government resources. The need for networking, training of professionals and developing alternative funding sources

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BOOK REVIEW

The Out-Of-Sync Child: Recognizing and Coping With Sensory Integration Dysfunction

By Carol Stock Kranowitz, MA
Published by the Berkely Publishing Group
375 Hudson St.
New York, New York 10014
($14.00 paperback)

Sensory Integration dysfunction is not well understood. Pediatricians don't study it in medical school, teachers don't learn about it in colleges of education, and the mass media rarely covers it. Most parents have little knowledge of it or may be reluctant to believe that it affects their child. To complicate matters, SI Dysfunction may tend to look like symptoms of several other problems (i.e. Attention Deficit Disorder.)

The Out-of-Sync Child is written in lay language so that parents can easily understand and use the information within. Ms. Kranowitz helps the reader recognize that SI Dysfunction is not a new problem, but rather a new definition for an old problem.

Explained within the text is the difference between the "far" senses and the "near" senses. The "far" senses of hearing, vision, taste, smell and touch respond to external stimuli that come from outside our bodies. Less familiar are the "near" senses which respond to what is happening within our own bodies. Three body-centered sensory systems provide the sense of oneself in the world and are the main focus of the book:

1) The ***tactile*** sense, received primarily through the skin, processes information about touch.

2) The ***vestibular*** sense, received primarily through the inner ear, processes information about gravity, movement and balance.

(Book Review, cont'd)

3) The ***proprioceptive*** sense, received through muscles, ligaments and joints, processes information about body position and body parts.

Problems in one sense or in a combination of the senses can affect many areas of development and function. Often when parents and teachers understand SI Dysfunction and how to better help a child organize his or her nervous system, many changes in the child's behavior and sense of self can be observed. Ms. Kranowitz offers a multitude of "how to's" ranging from parent questionnaires to help look at the child's responses to sensations to interventions, such as a "sensory diet" or intense Occupational Therapy. Not only does the author help parents understand what SI Dysfunction is, she explains what interventions may help as well as why treatment is important.

This wonderful, easy to read book is great for anyone who is parenting or working with a child whose unusual behaviors are hard to understand. It is this reviewer's guess that while reading the book, whether you are a parent or a professional (or both!), you will have many "Ah-Haa!" moments as you begin to understand the child behaviors that previously had been mystifying.
Reviewed by Lisa Smith, EI Specialist and OAIMH Board member.

HOLD THAT DATE !!

Plans are all ready underway for next year's OAIMH Annual Conference! By popular demand, we will be back at scenic Deer Creek Lodge. We are on the path of some national level leadership for the event. More details will be forthcoming, but for now, please hold this date open:

NOVEMBER 8, 2002

NEW MEMBERS ELECTED TO OAIMH BOARD

Upon the inception of the Ohio Association For Infant Mental Health, the first board members were elected to staggered terms-three for three years, three for two years and three for one year-to allow for continuity as the years progress. Time came last fall for the one year folks to be replaced. All then active OAIMH members had the opportunity to vote either by mail or at the Annual Conference for three persons they chose from a slate of nominees.

Results of the election were announced at the Conference, but for the benefit of the 90 or so of you who weren't there (Where were you, anyway?), here is an introduction to your new Board members:

Re-elected to the board is Jan Kushmaul from Springfield. Jan has been serving as the charter Treasurer for OAIMH. A long time member of the Infant Mental Health Stakeholders Committee at the State Dept. of Health, Jan has provided training, supervision and direct service to infants and their families for many years in Clark County. Currently she is the Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant for Greene and Clark Counties.

New to the Board but not to state level Infant Mental Health advocacy is Kate Merrilees, long-time chairperson of the Infant Family Mental Health Subcommittee of the Interagency Coordinating Council of the Ohio Department of Health. An Infant Mental Health clinician, Kate has also provided many trainings in the field to practitioners here in Ohio and in other states as well.

Our third recently elected Board member is

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Mental Health in Early Childhood Conference

The 2nd Annual Child Focus Mental Health in Early Childhood Conference will be held on March 14th and 15th 2002. Conference participants will have an opportunity to gain knowledge of issues relevant to mental health in children birth to five years old. Some of the issues discussed in breakout sessions during the two day conference include: childhood eating disorders, developmental and mental health needs of young victims, models of assessing and treating childhood trauma, fatherhood, mental status exams in infants and toddlers, autism spectrum disorders, helping young children with aggression and anxiety, and a panel discussion focused on the emotional needs of children who have experienced trauma, such as those who experienced the New York tragedy. These are only a few of the sessions that will be offered. This conference is sponsored by the Ohio Department of Mental Health and the Ohio Association for Infant Mental Health. The conference will be held at the Eastgate Holiday Inn, just outside of Cincinnati, Ohio. For more information, please contact Butch Losey at 513-752-1555, e-mail: butch @child-focus.org, or check out the website at www.child-focus.org.

President ***(Continued from page 1)***

Perhaps you've run into others. Whatever the reaction, one of the goals of OAIMH is to spread the word here in Ohio about the importance of Infant Mental Health and to clarify what we mean by that term.

An educated public is a public that will seek out services for their children. Supporting the provision of Infant Mental Health services is of equal importance to the Association.

Please send me your reactions to this newsletter. It would be nice to add a "Letters to the Editor" feature next time. If you have suggestions or would like to submit an article, please e-mail me at deacob@aol.com or call/fax me at 937-429-5107. *John*

CHAPTER CHAT

A Wonderful Thing Happened/ A Terrible Thing Happened: A Book Review Plus

Here's how I found a great resource: A book, A Terrible Thing Happened by Margaret M. Holmes was brought to the Baby Team meeting in Erie/ Ottawa Counties by Mary David who is with Parents as Teachers. Barbara Feldmar of Bayshore Counseling Services has done a wonderful job in establishing the Baby Team, and on this January day, thirty professionals gathered to hear Dr. Miriam Rosenthal of University Hospital/Case Western Reserve speak on maternal depression. Following the talk and discussion, Mary showed everyone her book. After lunch, Karen Ponting of Lorain County's Baby's First and I dashed over to the Wal Mart across the street. Mary had identified that as the place she had found the book. Karen and I bought all eleven copies on the shelf. I took mine and distributed them to our OAIMH Board Members at our January 11th meeting. The sharing of infant mental health resources is the wonderful thing that happened. Thanks, Mary! But why was I excited to find A Terrible Thing Happened?

This book is a 'story for children who have witnessed violence or trauma'. The animal character, Sherman, tries all kinds of ways to get rid of the terrible memories. He tries not thinking about the thing that he saw, but that did not work. He had to 'play more, run faster and sing louder' in order to forget. His stomach started to bother him, he felt sad and nervous, and he couldn't sleep well. He had bad dreams and he started to be angry all the time. This got him into trouble, and he felt even worse. Finally, Sherman met Ms. Maple who helped him draw and talk about the terrible thing, and he came to realize that it wasn't his fault. He began to feel much better. This book can be used to help children begin to share the terrible things that have happened in their lives, and since the 'terrible thing' is never described in the book, it can be of many types (domestic violence, accidents, natural disasters, fire, etc.). Thumbs up - it's a winner!

Annemarie Helm, OAIMH Board Member from the Northern Ohio Chapter.

(Eds. Note: You, too, can report the activities of your chapter in Baby Talk! Need to form a chapter? Contact Mike Thomasgard at ThomasgardM@Pediatrics.ohio-state.edu for more info.)

Deer Creek Conference *(Cont. from p.1)*

for local, regional, and state-wide efforts to develop service, consultation, professional training and public education Infant Mental Health programming.

After lunch, participants took part in an experimental "round table" process. In response to requests from members for training that was process as well as content oriented, an array of small groups were provided, each on a different topic and each with a facilitator. Topics covered ranged from Autism to maternal depression to rural home visitation to reasonable consequences for toddlers. Each session was repeated, giving participants an opportunity to sit at a couple different tables. Judging from the evaluations, this is a format to consider for future conferences.

Thank you to all who joined us in Deer Creek. The opportunity to retreat with others who understand working with infants and families makes the effort worthwhile. The efforts of the conference committee (Dixie Morris, Lisa Smith, Roz Williams) along with your participation made the conference a success.

New Board *(Continued from page 2)*

Jeffrey Rosenbaum. Jeff is a psychologist with 20 years experience working with infants and young children. He comes to us from Beech Brook in Cuyahoga County where he is overseeing a pilot Infant Mental Health program. He has a particular interest in early intervention with children with Autism.

We say thank you to Annemarie Helm and Jim Mulick who have completed their charter terms of service. Fortunately, Annemarie is back as the Board rep for the newly formed Northern Ohio Chapter (Note her article in ***Chapter Chat*** on this page.)

Psychiatry for the Youngest

By *Dr. Beth*

Today's topic is: Autism, Autism Spectrum Disorders, Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD and MultiSystem Develop-mental Disorder (MSDD)

What is the meaning of all these labels? Just the nomenclature itself can be confusing. This potpourri of labels represents a problem common to all child psychiatry diagnoses: they are purely phenomenological diagnoses. That is, they describe the symptoms of the condition but do not help us to really understand why the symptoms are occurring and thus what we should do to make things better.

This difficulty arises in part from the differences between children and adults. Children, particularly the very youngest, have a more restricted repertoire of behavioral options to use to display their distress: distress in one three-year-old looks similar to distress in a second three-year-old, despite differences in the causes of the distress.

Autism Spectrum Disorders is clearly a category where there is a broad hetero-geneity, all with the same label. There have been very significant advances in our understanding of these disorders over the past few years.

I conceptualize three levels of concern and intervention in managing these disorders. Level III concerns are the reason most people present to psychiatrist. There are symptoms--behavioral problems--that they are hoping can be fixed with medication. Level III interventions include medications, structured behavioral programs such as ABA and family counseling and support.

II therapies are appropriate. Level II involves assessing the processing patterns (motor planning and sequencing, visual-spatial processing, auditory processing and sensory integration) of the patient. We look for which of these patterns is atypical and creating a mismatch with environment- al expectations or, conversely, which patterns are typical but are resulting in symptoms as the child attempts adaptive strategies.

Level II interventions include sensory integration treatment, listening programs and auditory integration pro- grams, structured auditory interventions, inter- active metronome, traditional physical and occupational therapy, specialized teaching approaches, Greenspan's Floor Time, optometric exercises, Irlene lenses, and overlays.

An assessment is not complete, however, without consideration of Level I factors. Level I concerns the biochemical underpinnings that are relevant to understanding ***why*** these individuals have processing problems. This gives us the opportunity to intervene at the most basic level and holds the promise of correcting ongoing problems and of correcting im-balances.

Level I interventions have to do with re-moving toxins, ameliorating biochemical imbalances and infections, correcting nu-tritional deficits, and providing necessary nutritional and other supplements. Some of the most striking recent advancements in our understanding of Autistic Spectrum Disorders have come at Level I.

Next from Dr. Beth: Level I Advances

(Dr. Beth is Elizabeth Finley-Belgrad, an Infant, Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist in practice in the Youngstown area.)