



The Brainwave Trust wishes to acknowledge the ASB Trust for their generous support of this newsletter.

From The Chair

As I write this the media is full of calls to outlaw gangs after the tragic shooting of two year old Jhia Harmony Te Tua in Wanganui.

Some years ago I spent some time with a South Auckland chapter of Black Power for a project I was working on. Call me naïve, call me a bleeding heart liberal – but I think those who call for the banning of gangs are getting it very, very wrong.

For a few months I hung out at the Mangere Headquarters most days and attended parties there most Friday nights. Yes, I was in a protected and unreal situation as a member of the media but at least I had contact with them, talked to them, listened. I think I gained a glimmer of understanding of the way they worked.

Scoff if you will, but my overwhelming impression was of warmth, structure, the whanau feeling, when things were going right. Yes, they fought and became frustrated with each other. So do most families. And this one had a lot of dysfunctional members to cope with.

Yes they looked intimidating and unfriendly. They don't trust the world. They are scared and all too familiar with violence, drunkenness, abuse. They look to each other for protection. The outside world looks dangerous to them. That is the way their brains have developed. That is the world as they know it.

There were aspects of gang culture I found repugnant – mostly the lack of status afforded to women and children. But I know these things are really changing rapidly. There have been huge efforts over the last few decades. (And there have been a multitude of examples of low status for women and children in the rest of our society, and in all societies for centuries. We didn't outlaw Rotary when they wouldn't admit women. We allowed education to effect gradual change.)

Spend five minutes really communicating with Black Power members and it is blatantly obvious what recruits gain from membership of this gang. Warmth, humour, support, a sense of belonging, group identity, shared values, a sense of power and protection, brotherhood, pride, non-judgmental approval – and a chance to earn a living, even if it is from the proceeds of crime. Very few of them have ever experienced any of these things within their families, schools or other social institutions that the rest of us rely on.

Make no mistake; these men were all once beautiful innocent children similar to James Whakaruru. They started life as innocent as the Kahui twins. Most were beaten and abused within an inch of their lives. Or ignored, or neglected. That's just a fact. If James Whakaruru, Delcelia Witika, Lillybing and the Kahui twins had managed to just survive and not died, chances are they would have been leading very similar lives to these guys.

No, it's not an excuse but it is a reason why some of them behave as they sometimes do. And it's a reason we need to look at when we try to think of a solution. Alienating them further won't help. Work on the children. Work on the next generation. Support the women and children.

It's tragic that Jhia died and it should never have happened. But so far (a few days have gone past) there has not been retaliation – once upon a time it would have been instant – that's progress. Jhia's Kohanga workers tell us she was clean and beautifully cared for and her mother was a caring and attached mother- that's progress.

Just as happens in our community when a child dies, I feel certain other Black Power families will be caring for Mum and Dad, grieving for Jhia, providing food and practical comfort and sharing money – a scarce resource. (Yes, a few gang leaders may have become very rich from drug money – the ordinary gang member still lives in dire poverty). Just as in our community they will be angry and hurting, struggling to understand, wrestling with their own guilt. The patches do not rob them of their humanity in most situations. And those that seem to lack basic humanity were deprived of it by cruel upbringings long before they started to wear a patch.

So – my solutions? I don't have any magic answers but I feel convinced the most progress is coming from supporting initiatives such as the Kohanga Jhia attended and from supporting gang leaders in their genuine efforts to improve on some issues.

I'm not advocating that we should turn a blind eye to criminal behaviour in gangs, whether that relates to drugs, firearms offences or violence. By all means, ensure the police and courts do what is required. But for solutions, let's focus on employment and a decent income for the families, good health and a great start for every child born. Shower them with Plunket help, HIPPY programmes. Let's provide the children of gang members with the kind of family support we all want for all children. Then they will not need to join gangs or, if they do, fight other gangs. Empower their parents to value education.

They will have a sense of belonging to their community, not a shared sense of being outcast, not a siege mentality.

I hope that Jhia's death will not result in the undoing of years of work by community leaders and gang leaders. Further alienation will not help children such as Jhia.

Haere ra, little Jhia – may we continue to work towards that you were named after – Harmony.

Sue Younger

From the Executive Director

Some exciting developments have unfolded for the Brainwave Trust during the first few months of 2007.

We started the year co-hosting The Family Ties Conference with the Centre for Attachment.

The deviation from the traditional series of one day seminars into a combination of plenary addresses and detailed workshops was well received and has raised the expectation of what the Brainwave Trust will deliver next year. To that end, we are working on an exciting initiative for 2008 and will keep you informed as plans develop.

Continuing with the good news, we are thrilled to announce that SPARC-Active Movement will sponsor the next 30,000 packages of our popular Cuddlewrap. Active movement is important for the healthy development of a child's brain - young children learn from movement and being physically active. This message beautifully aligns with Brainwave's and we are delighted to have the support of SPARC- Active Movement. We are also indebted to Bill Farmer for managing the ordering process and negotiating with the manufacturers on Brainwave's behalf. We anticipate that from July, the Cuddlewrap will once again be available to all mothers of new babies who receive a Bounty pack through the maternity system of Bounty Services Ltd.

The Mothers in Prison Project has expanded to include presentations to Auckland Regional Women's Prison and a planned presentation to Christchurch Women's Prison in June. This will complete the pilot project and the next stage will be to secure funding for regular presentations to each of the women's prisons. The programme continues to be a valuable course that influences each of the women at some level as evidenced by their evaluation reports. Again, we are grateful to "The Sir Thomas and Lady Duncan Trust" for funding this programme and to "The Books in Prison Trust" who have opened the doors for us.

Brainwave Trust couldn't exist without the support of some wonderful people and organisations. For the last two years, Brainwave has been fortunate to have been chosen as the National project for the 22 Soroptimist International Clubs in New Zealand. They have done so much for us from fundraising, organising



Soroptimist Mary Lewin promoting the Brainwave message

presentations through to filling conference kit bags. They are an inspirational group of women and we are very appreciative of their two years of dedicated hard work on our behalf. We are also grateful that several of the Soroptimist Clubs will continue to support the Brainwave Trust in their region. This year they have provided the funding for a National Brainwave Presenter's Hui which was held on May 12-13th. This was a fantastic opportunity to bring all our presenters together, discuss and review the presentation programme and share knowledge. It was extremely successful and something we hope to make an annual event.

We would also like to acknowledge the wonderful support we have received in the form of financial grants from the following organisations.

The ASB Trusts, JR McKenzie Trust, The Tindall Foundation, Chenery Memorial Trust, The June Gray Charitable Trust, New Zealand Beef & Lamb Marketing Bureau Inc., SPARC Active Movement.

Kim van Duiven
kim@brainwave.org.nz

Brainwave Brevities

At the end of 2006 a number of scientists from prestigious US universities published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences - the abstract follows:

"A growing proportion of the U.S. workforce will have been raised in disadvantaged environments that are associated with relatively high proportions of individuals with diminished cognitive and social skills. A cross-disciplinary examination of research in economics, developmental psychology, and neurobiology reveals a striking convergence on a set of common principles that account for the potent effects of early environment on the capacity for human skill development. Central to these principles are the findings that early experiences have a uniquely powerful influence on the development of cognitive and social skills and on brain architecture and neurochemistry, that both skill development and brain maturation are hierarchical processes in which higher level functions depend on, and build on, lower level functions, and that the capacity for change in the foundations of human skill development and neural circuitry is highest earlier in life and decreases over time. These findings lead to the conclusion that the most efficient strategy for strengthening the future workforce, both economically and neurobiologically, and improving its quality of life is to invest in the environments of disadvantaged children during the early childhood years."

The full paper is available on <http://www.pnas.org/cgi/content/short/103/27/10155>

What a treat Bruce Perry's new book is - see the review in this issue. In the acknowledgements he pays a wonderful tribute to our own Robin Fancourt, a founder of Brainwave. He says:

"... I am grateful to the current and former Fellows and staff of the Child Trauma Academy. The compassion these clinicians show for troubled children has always been inspiring and the intellectual stimulation they provide is priceless. First among equals is Dr Robin Fancourt, a remarkable and selfless paediatrician who has transformed an entire country by her efforts".

Be prepared to be very boring when you read this book - despite its sometimes grim material it is a real page turner.

www.ChildTraumaAcademy.org

An article in the Sunday Star Times, 6 May 2007 by Ruth Laugesen discusses a recent study by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research on childcare.

It was good to see that the Brainwave message is starting to be incorporated in general thinking, in particular:

"...But for many small children the stakes for quality of care have also risen sharply. More are being put into care for long hours, and more are there during the crucial first two years. It is during those first two years that infants ride the fastest learning curve of their lives, with their brains developing at phenomenal speed."

The full report to which this refers is available on www.nzcer.org.nz/default.php?products_id=1858

A Big Thank You to a few of the people who help Brainwave in so many ways:

Sally Tye who has spent countless hours sharing her years of experience and skills to help us with PR, marketing and fundraising issues.

A special thank you to Mary Lewin and Daphne Wood, two Soroptimists who personally donated their fees for invigilating national exams, to Brainwave.

Mark Greenhalgh of Paragon Design who has, pro bono, helped us to recreate and redesign our website and continues to help with ongoing development.

Robert Willis and Evelyn Chin of CST Nexia who, pro bono, prepare our monthly management accounts and are always ready and willing to provide us with sound financial advice.

Anthea Springford

Book

The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog and other stories from a child psychiatrist's notebook

Bruce Perry, MD, PhD and Maia Szalavitz. New York: Basic Books 2007

In this elegantly and sensitively written book, Dr. Bruce Perry does for child psychiatry what Oliver Sacks has done for neurology*.

Perry and his co-author make accessible to the general reader both the science and the art of working as a mental health therapist with some of the most vulnerable members of our societies. The cases let us enter not only the lives of the terribly damaged children that are described, but also the detailed clinical thinking of someone whose deep-seated humanity has allowed him to make the very best use of the most up-to-date brain science, to which he has also contributed. As such it is as much intellectual history as it is case-study and all the stronger for it.

In the pages of this book, you will meet the children brain-washed by David Korech at the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas. You will meet a boy whose childless caregiver gave him what he believed was sufficient: the same care as he gave his dogs. You will meet a family whose one son is a well-adjusted contributor to society and the other a brutal murderer and rapist. Why the difference? Because at a crucial stage of the second son's life, he was left alone for long periods of the day by parents who did not understand that food, clothing and warmth are not enough. Another story tells of a young girl whose failure to thrive turned out to be because her poorly

raised mother did not know how to give the love and touch that she herself had never had.

These stories and many others in the book are stories of terrible crimes against children, most of them born of ignorance rather than malice. And it would be easy to take a moral high-ground and suggest that these terrible deeds are a product of an American society that has little in common with our own. However, our rates of child abuse and neglect in New Zealand – 9 children each year killed by a caregiver, 193 children hospitalized in 2006 with deliberately inflicted injuries, 5,077 children in care – suggest no cause for complacency. The stories in this book could just as easily have been New Zealand stories, and the responses we need to make to them need to be equally sophisticated and well informed by neuroscience as Dr. Perry's.

Reading this book, I discovered all over again why Dr. Perry is a world leader in child psychiatry and neuroscience. I found it reinforced the importance of the work we do in Brainwave Trust. And I felt thankful anew that we have been so lucky to have Dr. Perry work directly with us in New Zealand. If anyone doubts the importance of the Brainwave Trust, they need only read this wonderful book.

Susan Foster-Cohen

**The Man who Mistook his Wife for a Hat', and other volumes.*

Presentation Update

Just as we all know that we need "five plus a day" of fruit and veggies in our diets, all parents, prospective parents and professionals working with young children need to know and understand the Brainwave message.

Our presenters are working hard at getting that message out there and the feedback continues to be positive from those who use our services.

Brainwave has 15 fabulous presenters spreading the Brainwave message and a further four in training. Two of our presenters-in-training are in Whangarei and will soon be busy spreading the Brainwave message into the Far North. Funding from The ASB Trusts has allowed us to recruit and train these new presenters and will also fund presentations to high risk-low income groups, meaning that we are able to reach a much wider audience this year.

The International Brain Research Organisation has granted us a small amount of funding to deliver free sessions to eight Teen Parent Units



Brainwave Presenters at the recent National Presenter's Hui

around the country this year. Several sessions have been booked already and we are looking forward to working with these young parents and their families.

New Zealand Beef & Lamb Marketing Bureau has kindly come on board as sponsors. Together with our own Brainwave booklets they are providing booklets on healthy nutrition for those attending our presentations

Thank you to those who have already booked a Brainwave session this year. We are continuing to work closely with organisations such as HIPPY, SPARC, Barnardos, Plunket and CYF. A big thank you to all the Active Movement Advisors around

the country who have really taken the Brainwave message on board and are organising presentations for parents and Early Childhood Educators in their regions.

We currently have 61 presentations booked and many more being finalised, so we are on target to double the 100 sessions that we delivered last year. We have presentations specially tailored for parents, community groups and professionals working with children and our presenters are based across the nation. Help us to spread the message. Book or sponsor a presentation today.

Jane Valentine-Burt
jane@brainwave.org.nz

A Few Words about Play

The United Nations High Commission for Human Rights recognises play as a birthright of every child. Play is an essential aspect of human development, contributing to the growth of skills across all domains of development (physical, cognitive, language, social/emotional).

Children need to play. They need it almost as much as food or water. And, as we can recognise that children will thrive if they are given a varied diet, we can acknowledge that a variety of play experiences serve children well.

Firstly, attention to the play-diet reinforces a key Brainwave message: that secure relationships underpin everything. It is a secure attachment relationship that allows a child to lose themselves in play, immersed in discovery and the mastery of new ideas and skills. And, to reinforce this, play provides opportunities for relationship-strengthening moments of connection between children and their significant adults. These moments are also part of the child developing an understanding of the social world and their culture.

Even a few minutes of focused play has the power to send vital messages to a child ('I am valued! I can make worthwhile things happen!') and by allowing children to lead the play, adults add to the moment a rush of opioids, those learning-enhancing, feel-good chemicals in the brain. (Sunderland, 2006) Were we designing a play-pyramid akin to the famous food pyramid, we could liken play that is both adult-supported and child-led to fruits and veggies.

Engaging in child-led play might involve language of description ("oh - you're putting the red block on top of the blue one!") the language of clarification ("would you like me to empty this out?") and the emotional language of appreciation ("Wow! You've built that right up to the top - you did so well!") Participating in child-led play is what I describe as 'hanging out on the floor' with a child.

These "high intensity relational moments" are also believed to contribute to production of noradrenaline, helping the thoughts and impressions of this warm, playful interaction become fixed in memory. (Sunderland, 2006) What a gift! Delightful memories of parental connection contribute to building a child's sense that s/he is fun to be with, and that time with other people feels great.

This all differs from adult-dominated play, which is more likely to include the language of instruction ("No, cows can't fly. Put it in the paddock. I've made a fence") of correction ("You've drawn the spider wrong. Count the legs - it's not supposed to have ten") or of criticism ("Now, try not to be so messy with the dough") This sort of play can reduce dopamine levels in a child's brain and activate stress chemicals - not only is nobody having any fun, but those chemicals can actually impede learning.

Imagine you're a toddler - which series of interactions would you rather be in? For that matter, imagine you're the adult involved in either type of play. Which is more fun? And, in the words of Bruce Perry, "If it isn't fun, it isn't play".

Child-led play is a tangible way for adults to practice genuine responsiveness to their children. With babies, this is an excellent opportunity for adults to pay attention to the wealth of preverbal communication that babies call upon - gaze, smiles, or turning away from over stimulation.

When adults are truly responsive, they will recognise their children's cues to engage in rough and tumble (or even the sweetly-named gentle and tumble) play. When playing sack o' potatoes with a preschooler or pretending to nibble a toddler's feet, whether enabling siblings' playful wrestling or encouraging boisterous play at the park, adults do more than the obvious. It is suggested that the emotion-regulating areas of the brain's frontal lobes

are stimulated by physical play, not to mention the benefits of positive touch - like invited tickles - on the developing brain.

And just as they need physical play, children need the opportunity for quiet times. Long periods of uninterrupted play are a great gift for infants, toddlers and children. Adults would serve children well to respect their focused play time in the way that they would refrain from interrupting a white-coated, microscope-gazing scientist. Adults can support this by providing opportunities for quiet concentration and by thinking about the impact of environment on play - for example, how often is the TV going? In these days of open-plan living, are there cozy places to be alone, or to read books with just one other person? Are there breaks from the interruption of radio and stereo?

But there will be times when children invite interruption, when they invite their adults to play, with a smile, a gaze, or a verbal invitation. Whenever possible, adults should accept such an invitation (even if the dishes are waiting!) and engage in child led or physical play.

It's also worth saying a couple of things about toys. For little babies, the most important toys are their significant people - whose voices, smiles, twinkling eyes, and comforting bodies are the only toys that young infants need - as well as baby's own body, of course. During early infancy, there is so much work to be done in figuring out "where I begin and mummy ends" and "how I move in space" that additional toys can interrupt that work.

As babies become ready to explore objects, keep them simple. A ball, a wooden rattle, or a cotton scarf are all excellent choices - it might just seem like a boring ol' ball to you, but for a child -who has no prior experience

with balls - it is a PhD in physics, a sporting scholarship and a Hollywood blockbuster in one. Intellectually and physically challenging, as well as mightily entertaining. Toys with flashing lights and touch-responsive noisemakers are just not necessary. Remember: the simpler the toy, the more complex the play. The more complex the toy, the more simple the play.

Similarly, toys for older children are most useful when they are open-ended, that is, can be used in a variety of ways. A plastic petrol pump will probably only ever be a pretend petrol pump, but a solid wooden box can be a petrol pump, a cave, an island, a waka, an operating table. Crayons, blocks, books, dough and simple toy people are other examples of worthwhile toys.

It is always worthwhile considering that all children have different temperaments and different sensitivities. What is fun play for some children may be overwhelming for others. This is especially true for children who are less developmentally mature. These children may need more support and uninterrupted time to play, as well as more time to prepare for play. The key to judging this: are there indications that the child is finding play pleasurable? If it isn't fun, it isn't play.

To summarise: adults who provide responsive interactions in child-led play, endorphin-rich physical play, simple and open-ended toys, and quiet time for uninterrupted play will go a long way to providing relationship-rich, brain-enhancing experiences for children. These are gourmet play experiences.

Miriam McCaleb

Reference:

Sunderland, M. (2006) *The Science of Parenting* London: Dorling Kindersley.

Recommended:

http://www.zerotothree.org/site/PageServer?pagename=key_play

<http://www.aap.org/pressroom/playFINAL.pdf>

http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/everyday_learning_and_play/

http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/why_play_is_important.html?highlight=play

http://talaris.org/spotlight_peekaboo.htm

<http://www.uvex.edu/ces/flp/ece/promprac/curricul/p4cusens.html>



India

What is it about India that makes the traveller question our increasingly materialistic western way of life?

My husband Chris and I spent a month there earlier this year working with World Vision.

We were both captivated by the place, not because of its physical beauty, because we were working with the poorest of the poor in remote villages and city slums, but by the energy of the place the zest for life and the concern for others that we found even in the most dire of circumstances. There's plenty that's not good about India, the corruption, the pollution, the widening gap between the very rich and the very poor, but we were constantly amazed by the resilience of the children, many of whom had been to hell and back. They seemed to be incredibly well adjusted, grounded young people.

Our travels began with a visit to World Vision's Born to be Free project in southern India. India is one of the biggest employers of child labourers in the world. The poor villages around Vellore make easy pickings for unscrupulous factory owners who are quick to take advantage of desperate families, using young children as virtual slaves. These families have none of the options that we take for granted. They are so poor they have no credit rating with standard banks, so they have to borrow from moneylenders to pay for things like medical bills. The money lenders charge outrageous rates of interest and if you can't afford to pay back a money lender you're likely to end up on the street ... so selling your child to a factory for a year or two seems like a viable option.

Some of the children we met had been sold for the equivalent of seventy New Zealand dollars a year and for that they had to work for up to thirteen hours in appalling conditions, often enduring merciless beatings from ruthless managers.

You'd be forgiven for thinking they'd be damaged beyond repair.

But we found quite the opposite. We found a resilience and a comfort with themselves and with adults that was quite remarkable... maybe that stems from their early upbringing.

Children who grow up in a village have a strong bond with their parents. As babies they are carried close to their mother.... if she's working in the fields she carries them on her back. These children didn't seem to have attachment problems! The extended family is a big part of Indian culture.... Many grandparents live with their sons or daughters and so there are plenty of hands to help with a crying baby. Of course television's not a feature of rural villages, so children find their fun outside with each other. They're not plonked in front of the telly for hours on end. They find joy in simple things, in fact the only toys we saw were little rough hewn wooden wheels attached with wire to bamboo sticks.... "cars".... the little boys had made them themselves ... they were enormously proud of their work! We watched the children playing in city slums Rolling an old tyre was a favourite game, that, and good old fashioned chasing. Most saw education as the only way forward. Many of the children we met were bright... one, Sivakumar, from the poorest village in the region, lives in a two room thatched hut with twelve other people. He is about to begin his BSc in computer science. He was so keen to succeed that he would study at night with his friends under the light of a street lamp. Sivakumar had missed two years of his schooling because his family sold him to a local cigarette factory.

Everywhere we went we noticed the respect with which children treated adults and each other.... that, and the generosity of spirit they had, a genuine concern for each other and others that comes from secure attachments.

I guess our time in India reinforced for me that what's really important if we want to build healthy families, is not surrounding our children with material stuff, but surrounding them with the love of those closest to them, particularly in those crucial first three years of life and having time to spend with them, not dollars.

From a wall in Kolkatta this, from Mother Theresa..."the poor are very great people. They can teach us so many beautiful things."

Judy Bailey

A Mother's Wish

Once upon a time, a young girl sat in a faraway hospital bed nursing her new baby in the still of the night.

Outside the window she saw deer huddled under trees on the snow clad banks of a frozen lake. She felt intense love and protectiveness towards the tiny new life in her arms. She wanted only the best for her baby. She wished that a fairy godmother could fly in the window and gift her new baby the life of her dreams.

That young girl was me. I was 23yrs old. A graduate student in upstate New York. My family lived 5,000 km away in Dublin, Ireland. I had never held a newborn before. I was dreading returning to my student apartment. I didn't even have a cot or baby clothes ready. No one had told me that sometimes babies arrive early... Three things struck me about my experience:

1. My instinct to want the best in life for my new baby was incredibly powerful.
2. No Fairy Godmother flew in the window to show me how to give my baby the life of her dreams.
3. The human baby is born so helpless. The deer outside my window could stand and run within hours of birth.

I started to devour books about baby and child development. The more I read, the more I learnt

about the vital importance of the first 5 years and the more determined I became to share this information with other mums. The seeds for my book 'Move Baby Move' were sown.

Through Brainwave, I was introduced to the work of Dr. Bruce Perry. He compares the developing brain to a four layered sponge cake comprising the brainstem, midbrain, limbic system and cortex. The brain grows these layers in a delicate sequence upwards and outwards. First developing a secure foundation through love and touch, building with sensory motor stimuli, social skill development and the higher cortical processes. Development of the lower layers greatly supports development of upper layers.

A baby is born helpless, with a largely undeveloped brain. The brain cells are only loosely connected. This results in an uncoordinated body. It will take around a year to walk and another four years for the brain to be fully formed. Newborn deer have well developed brains. This enables excellent physical coordination almost straight away which enables them to run within hours to escape predators.

What is exciting, as Jeremy Griffiths points out in 'A Species In Denial', is that a human baby's immature brain at birth is central to our ability to learn to be uniquely human. We are dependent on our caregivers for an exceptionally long "in-

arms" period. This gives us, as a species, the unique opportunity of extended learning from the dual stimuli of our caregivers and our environment. This promotes the development of memory and intelligence.

Our powerful memory is what sets us apart from the rest of the animal kingdom. Memory enables us to develop new levels of intelligence from generation to generation - each retaining accumulated knowledge and passing this on to its successors.

When we nurture our babies in safe, stimulating environments, our children learn empathy and sharing, fully expressing their developmental potential. They develop their own natural, intrinsic intelligence. Every baby is born with unlimited potential.

We have a window of opportunity, in the first five years, while our babies' brains are forming, to provide a safe and nurturing world. By empowering mums to nurture their babies through love and well informed care giving, we can grow happy, healthy, confident and well-balanced children for the peaceful and sustainable future of our planet. That is the best wish any Fairy Godmother could give. That is the wish behind my book.



*Sophie Foster,
new Brainwave Committee Member
www.movebabymove.info*

Infant Mental Health – the social and emotional health of our zero to three year olds

In my job as a paediatrician in South Auckland, it always makes my day when I'm sitting in (yet another) meeting with a group of people and I hear "Brainwave" quoted. My auditory system engages, I inwardly smile, feel good and might even be able to engage in some cortical connections and make an intelligent comment. This is testimony to the energetic, evidence-based advocacy that Brainwave does, that the message is getting out there and it is making a difference.

From a gentle splash there is now a wave of interest in the social and emotional wellbeing of infants. As a health professional I am seeing growing evidence of this and it is this information I want to share with you; evidence of a new commitment to Infant Mental Health (IMH).

So what do I mean by Infant Mental Health? The definition that sits most comfortably for me is put forward by the Zero to Three Policy Centre (2004).

"Infant Mental Health is the developing capacity of the child from birth to three to experience, regulate, and express emotions; form close and secure interpersonal relationships; and explore the environment and learn- all in the context of family, community, and cultural expectations for young children. Infant Mental Health is synonymous with healthy social and emotional development."

Infant Mental Health is not a term Brainwave necessarily uses or even needs to use. It definitely and understandably doesn't fit comfortably for many in our wider community. In fact it is viewed as negative and deprecatory particularly for Maori and Pacific peoples. In considering further service development we need to think about other terms that will encourage people to access help. However we do need to have an understanding of its meaning; that for many throughout the world it is a positive message, that there is a huge body of research and literature published under the term and there is a large and dynamic group of people, particularly in health, who define themselves as working in this area.

So what are the developments? For me personally; last year the Counties Manukau District Health Board (CMDHB) Mental Health Development Team contracted Dr Sally Merry, Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist with a core group of national experts - Drs Trecia Woules, Hinemoa Elder, Denise Guy and Monique Faleafa to develop a report on Infant Mental Health and its relevance to the people of Counties Manukau. They were supported by "external advisors"

outside the DHB and "internal advisors" from the DHB. The project included a stocktake of government funded infant mental health programmes and services currently available in Counties Manukau for 0-3 year olds, from IMH promotion to prevention and early intervention, to treatment. The second task was a review of national and international best practice. This included a fairly comprehensive literature review assessing the evidence looking at

- a) universal preventative interventions aimed at improving the emotional and social health of a whole population;
- b) targeted or selective intervention to infants and families where there is moderate-high risk of an infant developing a range of developmental, behavioural, social and emotional problems;
- c) therapeutic interventions/treatment when infants and caregivers have current difficulties.

It was recognised this approach would favour the traditional scientific method and large institutionally funded studies, missing some potentially important NZ initiatives. A pragmatic approach therefore included a separate chapter on NZ information and services exploring other ways of working with whanau and infants. Information was also gathered from face to face and telephone interviews with key national and international experts.

Final analysis will include the priority aims for the development of IMH in Counties Manukau. Research shows it is cost effective. Outcomes can improve in the short and long term. Specialist mental health may need to initiate and support programmes but most activities should be in the community and outside psychiatry. Training will be needed and trained health professionals with high level skills for the complex cases and to support other levels. There is real support for the development of IMH services though mindful of the need to develop interventions that are accepted by and effective for the people of South Auckland.

The report is in its final draft and the literature review will eventually be available on request from the authors with the intention it can provide a starting point for the development of services in other areas of the country. Certainly work is beginning internally for the next phase and development of services in South Auckland.

Beyond South Auckland the wave is moving. The Upper North Island Infant Mental Health Group is a multidisciplinary group of health care professionals interested in improving services for infants and their families. We have been meeting regularly to network and advocate for the development of services addressing infants' social and emotional health engaging different sectors.

Try www.psychiatry.net.nz/imhnz

The Infant Mental Health Association of Aotearoa New Zealand (IMHAANZ) has been launched with reports of an excellent Infant Mental Health day in Wellington last month. A group of very committed and knowledgeable individuals worked for two years to establish this association. Their aim is "to provide an organisation in which practitioners and researchers can learn from one another and to network more effectively so that our sad statistics of child abuse, neglect and family hardship in NZ are reduced". I would encourage you to join by contacting Kimberley Powell, Massey University College of Education, Private Bag 11222, Palmerston North.
Email: K.Powell@massey.ac.nz

If any of the above inspires you there are increasing opportunities for professional development. Check the Werry Centre website www.werrycentre.org.nz for details of any forthcoming training. The Christchurch School of Medicine and Health Sciences, (University of Otago) offers a Postgraduate Certificate in Infant Mental Health.

Contact: judith.stone@chmeds.ac.nz

The New South Wales Institute of Psychiatry offers a Postgraduate Diploma and Masters in Infant Mental Health www.nswiop.nsw.edu.au. And this list is by no means exhaustive.

So the wave is out there, it just behooves each and every one of us to catch and then ride it, to further the social and emotional health of the infants of this country. My thanks to all the core group of the CMDHB Infant Mental Health Project for all their work and sharing of information.

Louise Porteous

Making a Donation

Would you like to make a donation, small or large, to assist us with our work? Please check our website, www.brainwave.org.nz (under the "make a donation" button on the main menu) or call or email us **09 528 3981**, for details.

Receipts will be issued - donations are tax deductible.

How To Contact Us

email : brainwavetrust@xtra.co.nz

web : www.brainwave.org.nz

ph/fax : 09 528 3981

mail : PO Box 55206
Mission Bay
Auckland