

Who we are, what we do, and what we are learning about working cross-culturally (case illustration)

Presenters: Dr Mary Cubitt, Oi Keun Tam and Dr Aram Kim

Dear members

This is a brief report about the meeting we had on 24th July 2018. Dr Sai Wong opened the meeting by informing the audience of the change to the organisation of CCIG meetings which he had been leading for over a decade now. He highlighted how each advisory group members will now facilitate each meeting and briefly noted next meeting in September which will be facilitated by Patrick Au.

This was followed by the introduction of speakers for the evening - **Mary Cubitt** (Senior Child & Adolescent Psychotherapist), **Oi Keun Tam** (Child Psychotherapist) and **Dr Aram Kim** (Consultant Psychiatrist). The topic of the evening was "**Who we are, what we do, and what we are learning about working cross-culturally (case illustration)**" introducing the basic concepts and theories surrounding Infant Mental Health as well as the 'workings' of the Infant Mental Health Team at Waitemata DHB (Mātua Tūhonongā) and walking through a journey of a fictional dyad through this service.



Mary Cubitt



Oi Kuen Tam



Dr Aram Kim

The presentation was broken into three major parts. First part of the presentation started off with active audience participations through watching two short video clips of the famous still face experiment, and using these to discuss and reflect on the concept of infant mental health. This was followed by more detailed theoretical introduction to attachment and its impact on children's development, in particular brain development. Importance of relationship (dyad) was highlighted and how babies cannot and do not exist on their own. Furthermore an emphasis was put on the fact that attachment is not about good/bad parenting or good/bad child, but rather it is about the strengths and struggles each bring to the relationship. Circle of Security model was introduced briefly as one of the treatment modalities used at Mātua Tūhonongā and also as to facilitate the audiences' understanding of the composite case which was to be presented later. The importance of the 'holding' that mom provides for the child was noted. This was then expanded to explain the 'holding' the therapist provides for mom and baby, as well as the holding that the team provides each members of the team, hence the relevance of presentation title, 'hands on hands'.



Second part of the presentation focused on cross-cultural issues that had been observed and experienced in clinical practices of infant mental health. These issues were presented, grouped to four main themes of issues - fear of negative impact for the child, issues around accessing and accepting interpretation and cultural supports, impact of shame, and difficulties with emotion. Real-life examples of how these issues manifested, impacted and worked-through during engagement, assessment and treatment processes were described. This was then linked to explain how different course and approach are needed when working with mother and child (and family) from different culture and language. The presenter then went onto point out how the therapist and the treating team can then play an important bridging role between the family and other agencies including educational, health and social agencies.



Last part of the evening involved a presentation of a composite case by Oi Kuen to illustrate how cultural issues could unfold and be managed throughout a dyad's journey through our service. The audience was clearly drawn into the case presentation with its detailed description of the dyad's

struggles and progresses as well as the presenter's reflection as a therapist on the experience of working with such dyad with its unique challenges and rewards. This particular composite case involved a Chinese mom and a toddler, with mom struggling particularly with identifying and supporting child's emotional needs, and toddler's struggle to manage 'big' emotions by herself manifesting in repetitive and sometimes aggressive behaviours. The presenter narrated the progress through therapy with helpful vignettes exemplifying the struggles and pivotal changes. One of the main themes in this therapy process involved specific cultural challenge of actuating the shift from teaching to 'enjoy with me' in play. The presenter also drew attention to often overlooked pitfalls

that exist in therapeutic relationship between a therapist and a dyad from same culture and language. Although there are many benefits to having a therapist from the same culture as the client/family's, especially speaking the same language, which makes it easier for the client/family to engage in the service, when under stress, the therapist can easily revert back to own culture to identify with the caregiver to get the job done and ignore the child's emotions, or the therapist can identify with the child to harbour negative feelings towards the caregiver.



In short, the presenters provided a synopsis of concepts and theories behind the practices of infant mental health team. Presentation also included how the overlay of cross-cultural issues can impact on engagement and therapy, noting the importance of modifying the pace and approach to 'meet them where they are'. As the presentation concluded, numerous members added comments and questions which prompted lively discussion for ten minutes or so before the final conclusion of the evening with show of appreciation for the presenters which occurred around 8.30pm.



For detail how these strategies could be developed, you can view the recording via

Vimeo link: <https://vimeo.com/2818123>

Password: WongConsultationGroup1234

Next meeting: it has now been decided that future meetings would be regularly held at two monthly intervals.

The next meeting will be:

Topic: Suicide Postvention – a Pacific Perspective

Tuesday: 25th September 2018 (6pm to 8.30pm)

Venue: Conference Room, Independent Living Service, 14 Erson Avenue, Royal Oak, Auckland

A flyer will be sent to you a month prior to next meeting in September

Thank you again for your interest and support and we look forward to seeing you at our next meeting.

Yours sincerely



Dr Aram Kim
On behalf of the
Cross Cultural Interest Advisory Group

For more information about the advisory group, newsletters, membership application, previous topics, please go to www.ecald.com/cross-cultural-interest-group/.

