



MHYF Vic Newsletter No. 40 September 2013

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“Lost opportunities and hope: why child health and development inequality really matters”.

This year's Annual General Meeting after-dinner speaker was Associate Professor Sharon Goldfeld, a paediatrician and Research Fellow in the Department of Community Child Health at Royal Children's Hospital.

Her presentation began with the proposition that healthy brain development is a pre-requisite for future health and wellbeing, and that the early phases are crucial. Plasticity of the brain decreases over time and brain circuits stabilise, so it is much harder to alter later. Health economists calculate that the return on investment in human capital in the early years is greater than at any other time in the lifespan, and that the returns far outweigh the investment.

Similarly, adverse childhood life events may have a long-lasting effect. Psychosocial factors

impact upon health through recurrent stress. An index of health and social problems shows a high correlation with social inequality. This is seen within countries and between countries. Disadvantaged children have higher rates of social, emotional, communication and literacy problems, which foreshadow a lifetime of continuing disadvantage.

It is possible to make a difference. High quality early childhood education and care by well-trained staff produces greater progress. To make a population difference will require more equitable use of universal health and educational services. Targeting only the poorly performing students or the lower socio-economic students will miss the majority of students in need. Intervention must be universal but with a scale and intensity proportionate to need.

The presentation closed with an account of the trial programs being implemented in the western metropolitan region.

In thanking her for her presentation MHYFVic President, A/Prof Jo Grimwade, said that Dr Goldfeld's clear exposition was a perfect example of the kind of work that MHYFVic wished to support in its advocacy for improvements in mental health.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO AGM

The MHYFVic President's Report to the AGM by A/Prof Jo Grimwade on 24th July gave a

comprehensive account of the diverse range of activities undertaken during the last year. Four, in particular, deserve special mention. These are the involvement with IACAPAP, AICAFMHA, the Children's Mental Health Coalition and the Winston Rickards memorial Oration.

The involvement with IACAPAP has largely been through the efforts of Dr Suzanne Dean as one of the Vice-Presidents on the organization and with responsibilities associated with the Asia-Pacific region and with consumer advocacy. The most important part of IACAPAP work this year has been in arranging for a consumer contribution to the annual RANZCP Faculty of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry conference in October this year. MHYF Vic will host two seminars at the conference. Associated with this conference is the provision of a study group for child and adolescent mental health professionals in the South Pacific, immediately prior to the main conference. MHYF Vic is helping in a range of ways from accommodation, seeking sponsors, and providing other support. As always, MYHF Vic is grateful to Dr Dean for her engagement with these many projects.

We continue to support our National Lobby group: AICAFMHA. MHYF Vic is pleased to acknowledge the work of Ms Jenny Luntz as a Director of AICAFMHA, representing Victoria, for the past nine years. Ms Luntz has decided to stand down from the organization. Although we await confirmation of the process whereby a replacement is recruited, we are hopeful that the Victorian Director role will be taken up by Ms Vicki Cowling.

The Children's Mental Health Coalition has struggled to gain momentum amid the myriad of issues that concern professionals within our field. Dr Allan Mawdsley has been MHYF Vic's participant in the meetings over the past two years. More recently, this Coalition has put

forward a proposal for budget consideration to fund Kids Life Centres which would provide universal access to information and support for families with children up to twelve years of age.

The most important event of the year has probably been the Winston Rickards Memorial Oration. Professor Allan Fels presented with great understanding as a carer himself and as chair of the Mental Health Commission of Australia, as well as past head of the ACCC. Our immediate past Orator, Justice Alistair Nicholson provided a splendid summary and response. Questions were drawn from the floor and provided a very lively exchange. The speech is on our website.

Another two items mentioned by Prof Grimwade were the Mental Health Council of Australia's release of a Road Map for the provision of services over the next ten years, and MHYFVic's endeavour to formulate an Atlas of Best Practice programs in mental health. He closed by thanking the Committee for their work over the past year.

HISTORY CORNER 1530

Just when I thought I had the earliest publication on paediatrics in English (Phaire, 1545, *The Boke of Chyldren*), Stephen Fry and **QI** pointed to Erasmus from 1530. Of course, he wrote in Latin, being a religious scholar, and the book may not have been in English by the time of his death in 1536, but it did come first in Western thought.

Erasmus was the illegitimate son of a priest and was raised in impecunious circumstances, although both parents ensured a classical education. Born Gerard Gerards on 28 October, 1466 (or 1467), his saint's name was Erasmus and he lived the first four years of life in Rotterdam, hence his priestly name of Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus. He produced a fine set of translations of original

text from Ancient Greek and Latin into contemporary languages, and translated part of *Revelations* into Ancient Greek because it was not in the original texts! He also wrote on general Humanist themes.

De civilitate morum puerorum has often been translated as *On Civility in Children*; but Australian academic Brian McGuire translated it as *On Good Manners for Boys*. The book was the biggest seller of the sixteenth century, and according to Amazon, went “into 130 editions over 300 years and ... translated into 22 languages within ten years of its publication”.

In an earlier work (1509), Erasmus’ humanism comes through in his support for teachers: *Declamation on the Subject of Early Liberal Education for Children or De pueris statim ac liberaliter instituendis declamation*. “Education’s first task was to teach children to speak clearly and accurately, and so parents were obliged to spend time with children and make sure that they heard good speech ... The teacher must be liked, for through his own personality he makes learning attractive. Schools, he complained, had become “torture chambers,” recalling his own experience and warning against sadistic and cruel practices, including those among students in initiation rituals ... The teacher was to become a father to his students, and Erasmus was confident that love would be able to overcome almost any challenge. Such a regime did not allow laziness or indifference: children were to begin to learn languages as early as possible. He remarked on the openness of small children to rote learning and how they excelled in memory and imitation” (McGuire, <http://www.fags.org/childhood/Co-Fa/Desiderius-Erasmus-of-Rotterdam-c-1469-1536.html> accessed: 12 August, 2013).

In the later book, “Erasmus here again pleaded for a gentle approach to the young,

but now he addressed the young themselves and described how they were responsible for their outward behaviour as an indication of inner life. Physical gestures should show respect for other people. Bodily functions should be kept under control. Erasmus emphasized modesty and propriety” (McGuire).

Some pieces of advice:

It is not polite to blow noses at the table or spit at the table and never put chewed bones back on plates (rather, throw them on the floor for the dogs).

At banquets, two people share each soup bowl and use squares of bread (trenchers) to serve as plates.

It’s inappropriate to wink at another person. For what is it other than doing yourself out of an eye? We should leave that gesture to tuna fish and one-eyed, mythical metal-workers.

As you wash your hands, so too, clear troubles from your mind. For it’s not good manners to be gloomy at dinner or to make anyone else miserable.

If someone crudely urges you to drink more, it’s fine for you to promise that you will respond to his request when you are grown up.

It’s just as rude to lick greasy fingers as it is to wipe them on your clothing, Use a cloth or napkin instead.

Some people, no sooner than they’ve sat down, immediately stick their hands into the dishes of food. This is the manner of wolves.

Making a raucous noise or shrieking intentionally when you sneeze, or showing off by carrying on sneezing on purpose, is very ill-mannered.

To fidget around in your seat, and to settle first on one buttock and then the next, gives the impression that you are repeatedly farting, or trying to fart.

Arguably, this is a book of manners, rather than behavioural psycho-education. However, the advice seems sound.

Does anybody know of any earlier sources that apply to child and family mental health?

Jo Grimwade

OUR NEW CONSTITUTION

At the Annual General Meeting the new Constitution was adopted. This was necessary because the Government has legislated for a new model Constitution covering all incorporated Associations. Our new Constitution complies with all the provisions of the model but incorporates all the provisions of our former Constitution. The only substantive change is provision for an additional category of "Associate Member".

2013 MHYF Vic Committee

- * President, Jo Grimwade
- * Vice-President, Jenny Luntz
- * Past President: Allan Mawdsley
- * Secretary, Zoe Vinen
- * Treasurer & Membership Secretary,
Lillian Tribe
- * Projects Coordinator, Kylie Cassar
- * WebMaster, Ron Ingram
- * Newsletter Editor, Allan Mawdsley
- * Youth Consumer Representative, vacant
- * Members without portfolio:
Suzie Dean, Miriam Tisher, Sarina Smale