

The outcome of an attachment-based infant mental health therapeutic play programme on infant temperament, parent-infant relationship & maternal reflective functioning

Joy Malinit*

Philippine Children's Medical Center, University of the East Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Medical Center

*Corresponding author.

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Aims. In the Philippines, there is a need for preventive, early intervention programs for perinatal and infant mental health. This is the first local study that investigated an attachment-based, therapeutic play programme (Baby Bonding) on infant temperament, parent-infant relationship and maternal reflecting functioning.

Background. This study was an effort towards bridging the "10/90 gap in infant mental health research" wherein 90% of the world's infants are born in low- middle-income countries (Population Reference Bureau, 2013b) and "only 10% of the worldwide spending on health research is directed towards the problems that primarily affect the poorest 90% of the world's population (Tomlinson et al., 2014).

Method. Phase I involved local validation of the Parent-Rated Outcome Measures (PROM)- Infant Characteristics Questionnaire (ICQ), Mother Object Relations Scale (MORS) and Parental Reflective Functioning Questionnaire (PRFQ). Healthy mother-baby dyads, from the low socio-economic stratum, were screened using Parent Evaluation of Developmental Status (PEDS) and Hospital and Anxiety Depression Scale (HADS).

Phase II carried out randomized controlled design wherein mother-baby dyads were enrolled either in the usual care group or the 6-weekly Baby Bonding intervention.

Result. 102 mothers answered the PROM. Their responses constituted the training set of the study tools. Baseline responses of the mothers from the usual care (N = 51) and intervention (N = 53) groups formed the evaluation set for the Filipino- translated instruments. In both the training and evaluation sets, if certain identified questions were to be removed from the PROM, better and acceptable Cronbach values were consistently generated.

There were no statistical differences on parent-infant relationship and reflective functioning between the usual care and intervention group. There was movement of the intervention group from high-challenging onto intermediate to low-levels of challenging temperament in the dull-dimension of the ICQ after 6 sessions. In comparison, infants in the control group remained in the high-challenging temperament after 6 weeks of usual care.

Conclusion. Linguistically validated study instruments (ICQ and MORS) provided accurate assessments of infant temperament and parent-child relationship. The Filipino-translated PRFQ has limited validity in evaluating parental reflective functioning (RF). "On-line" measures that video mother-baby interactions could have better captured changes in RF. As measured by the dull dimension of the ICQ, the Baby Bonding programme improved sociability of the infants (7 months or younger).

Maternal immune activation generates anxiety in offspring: A translational meta-analysis

Ursula Matos¹*, Laiana Azevedo Quagliato¹ and Antonio Egidio Nardi²

¹Institute of Psychiatry, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro and ²Full Professor of Psychiatry, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro

*Corresponding author.

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Aims. Maternal immune activation (MIA) during pregnancy is recognized as an etiological risk factor for various psychiatric disorders, such as schizophrenia, major depressive disorder, and autism. Prenatal immune challenge may serve as a "disease primer" into an altered trajectory of fetal brain development that, in combination with other genetic and environmental factors, may ultimately result in the emergence of different psychiatric conditions. However, the association between MIA and the offspring's chances of developing anxiety disorders is less clear. To examine the effect of MIA on offspring anxiety, a systematic review and meta-analysis of the preclinical literature was conducted.

Method. A systematic search of the PubMed, Web of Science, PsycINFO, and Cochrane Library electronic databases was performed using the PRISMA and WHO methodologies for systematic reviews. Studies that investigated if MIA during rodent's pregnancy could cause anxiety symptoms in offspring were included.

Result. Overall, the meta-analysis showed that MIA induced anxiety behavior in offspring. The studies provide strong evidence that prenatal immune activation impacts specific molecular targets, synapse formation and function, and a disbalance in neurotransmission that could be related to the generation of offspring anxiety. Future research should further explore the role of MIA in anxiety endophenotypes.

Conclusion. According to this meta-analysis, MIA plays an important role in the pathophysiological mechanisms of anxiety disorders and provides a promising therapeutic target.

Exploring the mental health impact on private flat owners in residential buildings with external combustible cladding

William Martin*

Warrington & Halton NHS Trust, UK Cladding Action Group

*Corresponding author.

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Aims. To explore the mental health of private flat owners in residential buildings with external combustible cladding, which require remediation following the 2017 Grenfell tower fire.

The speed at which the fire at Grenfell spread, killing 72 people, is largely attributed to external combustible cladding. It is increasingly suspected that there are ongoing profound effects on the mental health of people living in flats with external combustible cladding like Grenfell both in the UK and abroad. The issue has left flat owners facing severe financial hardship, the threat of bankruptcy and concerns about safety in their own homes.

Method. An exploratory 'Google Forms' online mental health survey comprising multiple choice and free text questions over 47 sections was distributed to flat owners in affected buildings. The survey remained open for 6 weeks to allow response. 550 individual responses were studied.

Result. 550 individuals completed the survey, from 143 buildings across 45 UK councils.

As a direct result of external combustible cladding:

89.5% said their mental health had deteriorated,
22.5% reported having suicidal feelings or a desire to self-harm,
71.1% reported having difficulty sleeping,
93.8% said they were suffering from worry and anxiety,
59.6% used coping strategies to deal with their situation,
35.1% said that existing physical and mental health conditions had been exacerbated,
84.1% said they cannot move on with their lives and