

The APPPAH Newsletter

News From the First Frontier: Conception To Birth

Official Bulletin of the Association for Prenatal & Perinatal Psychology & Health, Winter 2007

*** **MEET OUR NEW MEMBERS!!** ***

Co-Creating APPPAH's 21st Century Evolution Your Participation Makes the Difference!

Last issue we announced APPPAH's **Membership Drive**, and true to form, our members and supporters demonstrated that they are devoted to our principles and determined to support our goal of further strengthening the voice and clout of the pre- and perinatal psychology movement. The more members and partners we enlist, the more effective we can be with our important message: the quality of conception, pregnancy, birth and postpartum is directly associated with the quality of individual wellness, public health, compassionate societies, and the well-being of the global family. Stay tuned in future issues for spotlights on new members and their "What inspired me to join APPPAH" stories. Meanwhile, we welcome APPPAH's new members for 2007!

| | | | |
|-------------|-------------|--------------------|----|
| Melody | Bourne | AUSTRALIA | |
| Dr Mia | Kalef | CANADA | |
| Anna Jean | Bradley | CANADA | |
| Mariela Roa | Rodriguez | CHILE | |
| Blanche | Fernandes | INDIA | |
| Dr Ofra | Lubetzky | ISRAEL | |
| Irma | Azomoza | MEXICO | |
| Soumaya | Slim | MEXICO | |
| Elena | Starostina | RUSSIAN FEDERATION | |
| Elinore | Detiger | SCOTLAND | |
| Helen | Holmes | UK | |
| Tamara | Donn, CCE | UK | |
| Vanessa | Dunham | USA | AK |
| Lynn | Kelsey, MA | USA | AK |
| Esther | Ames | USA | AZ |
| Cynthia | Byers, RN | USA | AZ |
| Debbie | Catz, MSW | USA | AZ |
| Kimberly | Mascaro | USA | AZ |
| Alyce-Anne | Meadows | USA | AZ |
| Julie | Rist | USA | AZ |
| Ofelia | Aragon | USA | CA |
| Lauren | Barrett, RN | USA | CA |
| Louise | Batsch | USA | CA |
| Nancy | Beyda | USA | CA |
| Michelle | Binicewicz | USA | CA |

2007 New Members continued on page 6

APPPAH Board Members "We are your partners!"

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Letter from the President

Greetings and Happy New Year ~

I hope this message finds you well and ready to start 2008 with joy and excitement. My co-president William Emerson and I are working hard to make this year a spectacular one for APPPAH. We are going to alternate writing this letter, so be looking for William's comments and ideas in the next issue.

The membership drive is underway and gaining momentum. You're sure to be inspired by the list of new members for 2007 listed in this issue. The membership goal for 2008 is 800, please consider signing up one friend or colleague. This simple act will make this goal easily possible. I will keep you posted on our progress as the year moves on. We intend to spotlight new members—or "old" members who have brought in new members!—in coming newsletter issues. It is important to know who we are and to highlight the amazing diversity of our membership. Our organization is unique in this way—it is what gives us depth and breadth in our field.



Wendy McCord, PhD

I'm happy to have heard from teachers who are excited about introducing APPPAH membership to their students. Our future lies with the students and it will indeed be in their hands before long. We want to make them feel welcomed and let them know they are truly valued. The board is currently giving serious consideration to a student board membership position.

Please note the email addresses and phone numbers of the APPPAH board members on the opening page, alongside the new members' names. We are all a team in this important journey, and we want to be accessible and visible. Please feel free to contact any one of us, as we actively welcome your input.

Look for this newsletter's article on Ricky Lake's new documentary, *The Business of Being Born*. There is no doubt that the conscious birthing perspective has entered the cultural mainstream! And on the topic of the newsletter, I'd like to extend to Marcy Axness congratulations on outstanding issues this past year. Her talents are a huge asset, and she has shown extraordinary patience and tact dealing with the new changes in APPPAH leadership.

There is also movement in the political arena. Here in Phoenix, the Department of Health has organized a think tank, as they're working hard to find ideas to improve the mother/baby birth outcomes in the state. Susan Highsmith, Barbara Findeisen and I have been working on a white paper that will encourage alternative birth options for healthier outcomes. They are a very forward-thinking group, totally and completely in sync with APPPAH's vision. I am very hopeful that soon there will be guidelines supported by the Board of Health that emphasize the consciousness of both mother and child from conception through birth. Gladys McGarey has been instrumental in having this group to pay serious attention to the concept of the sacredness of the womb.

On a personal note, a joy in my life is the pregnancy of my daughter—my granddaughter is expected in March. It has been a powerful feeling to know that my daughter is having a daughter. She reports that Kaiser Hospital in Oakland, CA, has been progressive in supporting doula care, breastfeeding, and has a 13% C-section rate. And finally, please keep your love and support for Thomas strong. At last report he is doing wonderfully. He will be dearly missed on APPPAH's board.

Happy New Year!
Wendy McCord

APPPAH at Asilomar!



April, 2009

Our 14th International Congress uniting ancient birth wisdom and modern scientific knowledge in the realm of prenatal and perinatal psychology will be held at Asilomar Conference Grounds, known as Monterey Peninsula's "Refuge by the Sea." Asilomar's dedication to the care of the natural environment mirrors APPPAH's dedication to the care of the human environment—specifically the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual atmosphere in which each human being is conceived, carried, born, and welcomed to Mother Earth.

In his classic book *A Child Is Born*, Lennart Nilsson states, "Billions of years ago the first living organisms appeared in the sea. Even today, all land animals, including human beings, carry this original watery environment within themselves." The Refuge by the Sea at Asilomar provides an opportunity to consciously acknowledge and embrace our ancient beginnings in "the original nursery of life."



Nilsson relied heavily on modern technology but still emphasized, in the beginning of his book, "At the center of our story, however, is neither technology nor modern medicine but the enduring miracle of pregnancy and birth. We hope to illuminate and to celebrate this universal experience."

APPPAH, too, seeks to bring its members and friends together to celebrate **The Miracle of Birth: Uniting Ancient Wisdom & Modern Science**. Join us at Asilomar Conference Grounds to share your visions for the future, to honor the best of both feminine and masculine energies—of intuitive wisdom and scientific knowledge—modeling the harmony of cooperation and co-creativity.

The forms for presentation submissions, as well as for registration, are available on the APPPAH website. The window for submissions is open until January 31st. Reservations for lodging at Asilomar will also be accepted beginning this January. Looking forward to seeing you there!

Sincerely, Judyth Weaver and Susan Highsmith

“THE BUSINESS OF BEING BORN”

Revolutionary film coming soon to a theater (or DVD player) near you

When actress Ricki Lake gave birth to her second child in her bathtub with a midwife attending her, she also gave birth to the idea for this extraordinary documentary. She recruited director Abby Epstein, who had directed her in a production of *The Vagina Monologues*, to “question the way American women have babies.” Together they created a film whose pulsing theme is “Birth is a miracle, a rite of passage, a natural part of life—and also big business.” Featuring some of APPPAH’s own, including Robbie Davis-Floyd and Michel Odent, the film premiered last summer in New York, receiving the only standing ovation at the Tribeca Film Festival. Its official West-coast premiere took place last fall at the Gentle Birth World Congress in Portland, Oregon.

Among the many misconceptions Americans have of midwives is the vague notion that they all ply their trade in bucolic, neighborly places like Ina May Gaskin’s iconic Tennessee farm, so part of the film’s brilliance is in setting this portrait of birth as “an intimate, sacred rite of passage” smack in the bustling financial/cultural pacemaker of the world, New York City. In the course of the verité-style film, Epstein follows several pregnant women as they weigh their options. Some of these women are or will become clients of Cara Muhlhahn, a charismatic midwife who, between birth events, shares both memories and footage of her own birth experience. The stories unfold against a backdrop of the trajectory of modern obstetrics from the 1920’s to the 90’s, starkly illustrated with often-disturbing historical footage. Along the way, Epstein conducts interviews with health providers, social scientists, and birth advocates about the history, culture and economics of childbirth. The film’s fundamental question: should most births be viewed as a natural life process, or should every delivery be treated as a potential medical emergency?

Myriad images of women having babies naturally feature prominently in *The Business Of Being Born*. Each experience is unique; all are beautiful and surprising—clearly the most physically challenging event these women have ever gone through, but also the most deeply rewarding. These powerful images are punctuated with starkly contrasting scenes of high-intervention hospital births and bleak evidence of our collective enchantment with technological management of natural processes, and where that has landed the U.S. on maternal and infant mortality measures. Bravo to the filmmakers for making clear the outrageous fact that medical training in obstetrics doesn’t include any exposure to healthy, empowered birth—*doctors in training never witness any!*



Director Epstein embarked on this project as an educated, accomplished and savvy “everywoman” when it came to her attitudes about her subject matter. In her own words,

When my friend Ricki Lake approached me about making this film, I admitted to her that I was afraid to even witness a woman giving birth, let alone film one. I had never pronounced the word “midwifery” (I learned it rhymes with “trickery”) and I thought Ricki insane, as she planned the birth of her second child, for passing up an epidural in a hospital delivery.

But as I did the research, I discovered that the business of being born is another infuriating way medical traditions and institutions – hospitals and insurance companies – actually discourage choice and even infringe on parents’ intimate rites, ultimately obstructing the powerful natural connection between mother and newborn child. As I began to shoot the film, I saw that nowhere does the tension between technology and nature play out more dramatically than birth.

“THE BUSINESS OF BEING BORN”

Story Continued....

The film takes a compelling turn into ever more personal territory when Epstein herself becomes pregnant during filming:

I hesitantly turned the camera on my own pregnancy and became my own subject. Initially making choices based on faith and intuition, I had to contend firsthand with all the issues and politics I had been exploring from a comfortable distance, until my choices were put to the ultimate test. The birth of my child and this film will remain forever intertwined, and both continue to surprise and thrill me every day.



Director Abby Epstein & Producer Ricki Lake

What Lake and Epstein have in mind is to empower and educate women so that they can make the best choice for them, rather than suggesting that one way is the way. They think that today's modern women need to be familiar with the statistics and know what the risks are, for both hospital births and natural, unmedicated home births; and to know what the general public is unaware of—how transformative it can be to birth a child naturally. They “want to shed light on a subject people don’t give enough thought to—which is how they’re going to have their babies. Most of us coming at it as busy working women, just go to the OB-GYN we’ve seen for years, do whatever they say—hospital, epidural. We want to show a whole new array of choices. And you should understand the political and historical context of how we birth in America.”

A socio-political historical inquest into American birth that is destined for the mainstream... that has already been covered by *People* magazine and *The View*?? Robbie Davis-Floyd is shouting hosannas!

The film has its official theatrical opening in New York, L.A. and San Francisco in early January, and will be available for rental through Netflix in February. It will be available for wider rental and DVD purchase in the spring, which is fantastic, as it will surely be an invaluable resource for childbirth and very early parenting educators. For updates, visit www.thebusinessofbeingborn.com.

APPPAH’s Laura Uplinger summed up *The Business of Being Born* as “a daring portrait of birth in the Big Apple, made to enchant, thrill, sadden, disturb and inspire audiences throughout the world. Now let’s hope for a sequel in which birth is approached from the baby’s perspective!”

--MA

UPCOMING CONFERENCE OF INTEREST

Trust Birth – sponsored by the Ancient Art Midwifery Institute; speakers include Sarah Buckley, Michel Odent, Henci Goer, John Stevenson, Jan Tritten, Marcy Axness, Jody McLaughlin, Karen Strange, Mindy Goorchenko, and more

Redondo Beach, CA

March 7-9

www.trustbirthconference.com

New Members Continued from Page 1

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------|---------------------|-----|----|-----------|----------------|-----|----|
| Amanda | Blake | USA | CA | Faith | Cornwall, CNM | USA | NY |
| Donna | Bringenberg | USA | CA | Katherine | Echo Kim, MS | USA | NY |
| Andra | Brosh | USA | CA | Mary Pat | Comes | USA | OH |
| William | Cook | USA | CA | Shelly | Pinnell, LISW | USA | OH |
| Theresa | Danna | USA | CA | Carol | Gray, LMT | USA | OR |
| Sage | DeRosier | USA | CA | Laurice | Dunning | USA | PA |
| Dolora | Dossi | USA | CA | Ellen | Wanner, RN | USA | PA |
| Sufi | Ertur | USA | CA | Anna | Brandon, PhD | USA | TX |
| Melissa | Fischer | USA | CA | Caroline | Peterson | USA | TX |
| Maria Elena | Gil, MSW | USA | CA | Susan | Tracy | USA | TX |
| Billy | Goldman | USA | CA | S. Laurie | Hansen, CNM | USA | UT |
| Maureen | Harrahy | USA | CA | Dawn | Wadiak | USA | VA |
| Kristine | Hicks, DC | USA | CA | Rachel | Natvig | USA | VT |
| Martha | Jimenez | USA | CA | Jennifer | Aguilar | USA | WA |
| Earth | Lande | USA | CA | Corey | Colwell-Lipson | USA | WA |
| Cecily | Miller | USA | CA | Sherie | McGuffey | USA | WA |
| Marjorie | Miller | USA | CA | Sue | Tarabochia | USA | WA |
| Susan | Minich, CNM | USA | CA | Jewell | Whitmer | USA | WV |
| Melody | Parke | USA | CA | | | | |
| Karen | Pecora | USA | CA | | | | |
| Laurel | Phillips | USA | CA | | | | |
| Raylene | Phillips, MD | USA | CA | | | | |
| Brooke | Ray | USA | CA | | | | |
| Fahimeh | Safiyar | USA | CA | | | | |
| Mary | Saunders Watts, PhD | USA | CA | | | | |
| Jude | Schaaf | USA | CA | | | | |
| Jake | Sifford | USA | CA | | | | |
| Gitta | Sivander | USA | CA | | | | |
| Aubrey | Slaughter | USA | CA | | | | |
| Elena | Tonetti | USA | CA | | | | |
| Jan | Torgeson | USA | CA | | | | |
| Beth | Wagland | USA | CA | | | | |
| Sarah | Puhy | USA | CT | | | | |
| Sharon | Vallone, DC | USA | CT | | | | |
| Elizabeth | LaFata | USA | IL | | | | |
| Olga | Lazala | USA | IL | | | | |
| Laurie | Friedman, CNM | USA | MA | | | | |
| Kellie | Carbone | USA | MI | | | | |
| Miranda | Amaris | USA | MN | | | | |
| Jodi | Hiland | USA | MN | | | | |
| Erica | Kroll | USA | MO | | | | |
| Mari | Howerton | USA | NC | | | | |
| Lisa | Mowery | USA | NC | | | | |
| Anita | Jaynes, CNM | USA | NE | | | | |
| Mark | Gold | USA | NH | | | | |
| Kathleen | Garza, CNM | USA | NM | | | | |
| Janet | Kirsch, CNM | USA | NM | | | | |

ARE YOU MISSING OUT ON SOMETHING THAT WOULD MAKE YOUR LIFE EASIER ??

APPPAH's Email News Alert Service is an optional online sign-up to help you stay "in the loop" with APPPAH and feel connected! We send occasional email announcements, such as to let you know when the electronic version of each new newsletter is available online, and may also be used to update folks about upcoming congresses, including discount registration deadlines, etc. Don't worry—we don't send out alerts very often, so you won't be deluged. And the list allows you to opt-in or opt-out at your own discretion.

Signing up takes less than a minute:
simply go to our homepage
(www.birthpsychology.com) and see the box
right in the middle of the page, and put in
your email and name—done!

SPREADING THE APPPAH NEWS

A big part of APPPAH's mission is to empower individuals and institutions with information about the "treasures of prenatal and perinatal psychology," and here we highlight the myriad ways in which our members are engaged in that. If you have something exciting to share in this regard, please send details to the newsletter editor at DrMarcy@QuantumParenting.com.

Laura Huxley, recipient of APPPAH's Thomas Verny Award in 2003, has not only spent the past 40 years dedicated to studying what makes the possible human, she has indeed spread that news. She founded "Children: Our Ultimate Investment" in 1977 as a means of promoting her mission that all children be loved and prepared for before conception. Her Teens & Toddlers program for at-risk teens integrated pre- and perinatal psychology education into a pregnancy / STD prevention program as one way of creating this in the world. Since its creation, Teens & Toddlers—which facilitates an ongoing relationship between at-risk youth and toddlers in local daycare settings—has become a model program for teaching emotional literacy and communication skills, raising school attendance, increasing teen participation in their communities, and much more. As successful as T&T has been here in the states, it has met with undreamed of success in England, where it has been taken to new heights by COUI UK, under the leadership of Diana Whitmore. The British government has recognized, through impact studies and independent evaluations, T&T's proven success at preventing pregnancy in at-risk teens as well as profoundly enhancing the lives of many toddlers in surrounding day care centers. The Youth Justice Board in Britain has awarded Teens & Toddlers UK with the Children's and Young People's Service Award (from a field of many other impressive programs, by the way!) Kudos to Laura for her vision, action, and brilliance! Please read more on this amazing initiative at www.children-ourinvestment.org.

As we went to press we received the news that Laura Archera Huxley died on December 13. This champion for children, for parents, for the "possible human," was 96.

Baby Film Fest Hits the Road: An APPPAH team of educators led by **Debby Takikawa**, **Marti Glen**, **Shelley Campbell**, and **Wendy McCarty** are organizing a two-day Baby Film Fest (read *blitz*—there are 27 films!) in Santa Barbara, March 14 and 15, 2008. They geared up the festival at the Gentle Birth World Congress in Portland last Sept., and they hope that Santa Barbara will be just the next stop for a traveling show. The revolutionary images in these films—in which the babies appear to be as happy as the parents about what is happening—just may be enough to inspire a new generation of confident and exuberant birthing. Against the background of 20th-century Hollywood versions of childbirth "education" that taught moms and dads and virtually everyone else in our society to fear birth, a stunning new genre of recent films is opening eyes wide to a whole new age of birthing. Among the big hits are **Elena Tonetti's** *Birth As We Know It*, based on the Russian waterbirth movement; Takikawa's *What Baby's Want*, which takes audiences into the depth and breadth of prenatal psychology; homebirth films like *A Clear Road to Birth*, *It's My Body*, *My Baby*, *My Birth*, and *Birth Day*; the historical pageantry of *A Midwife's Tale*; *Baby-led Breastfeeding*, a new appreciation of the baby's wisdom; and *Finding the Words*, the dramatic story of parents and children who conquered autism. And, as revealed in *Waterbirth in the 21st Century*, you have never seen waterbirth like they are doing it in Ostend, Belgium! For further info, Debby's email is debwbw@yahoo.com.

Thomas VERNY, M.D., Resigns from APPPAH Board

[Ed note: We received the following letter from Thomas, and are publishing it here in its entirety.]

Dear members and friends of APPPAH,

It is with some reluctance that I have decided to resign from the Board. I believe that this is a good time for me to remove myself from the Board and to make room for new members with new ideas. I am not leaving APPPAH, I have every intention to be involved in APPPAH and to be available to the Board, should my counsel be required. I am confident that the present Board is made up of a group of very capable, talented and dedicated people who will provide excellent leadership to this association.

It does not seem such a long time ago (but actually it is 25 years), when a small band of enthusiasts led by my wife Sandra in Toronto, and supported by David Chamberlain from far away in San Diego, organized the first International Congress on Pre- and Perinatal Psychology in Toronto. This was followed by the founding of PPPANA (Pre- and Perinatal Psychology Association of North America), the publication of the Newsletter and eventually, the Journal. And of course, the organization of international congresses every two years. It has been for me a sometimes trying, even frustrating, journey. However, the personal satisfaction that came with toiling on behalf of the future of this planet far outweighed the difficulties and sacrifices that this odyssey required. We have achieved much and much remains to be done. I feel blessed for having been granted the opportunity to make a contribution in the area of Pre and Perinatal Psychology. And I feel very grateful to all of you for your friendship and your support, both of myself and of our association.

Finally, I want to express my thanks to many of you who have sent me good wishes for a speedy recovery. I am happy to report that the chemotherapy, along with homeopathic and naturopathic remedies that I received, has been successful. I got through four rounds of chemo without any ill effects; I have not lost any hair (I didn't have that much to lose in the first place, so that's good) nor any weight (which I would have gladly lost.) So, this is not good-bye but au revoir, and see you at the Congress in Monterey in 2009.

With best personal regards,
Thomas

RESEARCH SUPPORT REQUESTED!

Dennis R. Archambault, a doctoral student at Pacifica Graduate Institute: "I am seeking sonographs images for my dissertation, *Human Birth: Cradle of Mythology*. (I have been working with Stan Grof and it is his work that inspired me to begin the doctoral program to research human birth's mythic implications.) The specific time period I am seeking is weeks nine, ten and eleven, when the fetus is large enough to be fully recognized and yet not so large as to fill the womb. My thesis is that the time in the womb corresponds to—actually generates—mythic resonances later in life. Mythically, this is the time the world's creation myths talk of "all is water," and "having the ability to fly," and then there are the universal images: the World Tree (umbilicus as tree trunk, placenta as tree crown); Serpent (umbilicus attached at the placenta with a triangular shaped "head"); Rope (umbilicus twisted); Ladder (umbilicus in "horizontal segments.") I am delighted to give credit to any individual or facility who provides a sonograph that I use in the dissertation." 25762 Dark Creek Rd., Calabasas, CA 91344; 818-591-8724 or dennisa@pacbell.net.

MEDIA WATCH

This section of the APPPAH Newsletter is intended to draw attention to items in the news that are pertinent to prenatal and perinatal psychology. APPPAH does not necessarily agree with, or vouch for, the scientific worthiness of any of the news items mentioned here. We mean merely to take note of what is going on, so that you may.

C-SECTION MOMS & BABIES AT SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER RISK

The UK press urged mothers-to-be to heed a new study involving more than 94,000 women with its stark warning: Caesarian sections double the risk of illness or death for mothers and are more likely to put their newborns into intensive care. Obstetricians in Wales hope it will help dissuade pregnant women from following the example of so-called “too posh to push” celebrities such as Victoria Beckham. Researchers, who included Jose Villar at the University of Oxford, randomly selected eight Latin American countries and 120 health facilities, which provided complete data on 97,307 deliveries of babies during a three-month period. One in three of the births was by Caesarean. The study—reported online in the *BMJ*—found that the risks linked to Caesarean births are higher, regardless of variables such as demographics, medical and pregnancy history, gestational age of the fetus, pregnancy complications, where the baby is born and the skills of those helping to deliver the baby. Researchers say that women should be given access to information on the risks. found that woman having a Caesarean delivery had twice the risk of illness—such as hysterectomies, blood transfusions and admission to intensive care—and death as women giving birth normally. The babies were at twice the risk of admission to a neonatal intensive care unit and had more than a 70% higher risk of death. These figures included non-emergency Caesareans and those chosen by a doctor, but excluded emergency Caesareans for life-threatening conditions and those for breech births. The main area where Caesarean delivery *improved* outcomes in non-emergency cases was for breech-birth babies, delivered bottom-first. Lorna Tinsley, national officer for the Royal College of Midwives in Wales, expressed concern that celebrities like Victoria Beckham, who had chosen “too posh to push” cesareans could influence other women, but hoped that examples like singer Charlotte Church would inspire future mums to give birth naturally. “We’re very proud as a college,” said Tinsley, “that Charlotte Church had exactly what she wanted, which was a beautiful water birth.” [Online icwales.co.uk, Oct. ‘07]

BREASTFEEDING HAS HEART-HEALTHY BENEFITS IN ADULTHOOD

In addition to suffering fewer ear, stomach and intestinal infections as children, adults who were breastfed as babies are more likely to have higher levels of “good” (HDL) cholesterol, a new study shows. They also have healthier body mass indexes. The study, led by Nisha Parikh of Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston, looked at 962 people, average age 41, taking part in the long-running Framingham Heart Study centered in Framingham, Massachusetts. About a quarter of the children were breast-fed for at least a month as babies. Those who were breast-fed were 55 percent more likely to have high average levels of high-density lipoprotein, or HDL, cholesterol in adulthood than low levels, and on average had a lower body mass index, or BMI, as adults -- 26.1 compared to 26.9 for the bottle-fed counterparts. Adults with a BMI above 25 are considered overweight and at higher risk for heart disease. These cholesterol and BMI differences were modest but significant. [Reuters, as reported on Lifescript online, Nov. ‘07]

EVEN “MILDLY” PREMATURE INFANTS UP TO 3 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO DIE

Infants born even a couple of weeks early may be more likely to die than those born at term, according to a new study reported in the November issue of the *Journal of Pediatrics*. Despite the overall decline in infant mortality rates since 1995, the mortality rates in 2002 were 3 times higher in late-preterm infants (born at 34 to 36 weeks’ gestation) than term (37 weeks or later) infants—7.9 versus 2.4 deaths per 1000 live births. “Quite a bit of growth happens in those last few weeks,” said co-author Joann R. Petrini. “A few weeks make a big difference in terms of survival.” The researchers note that induction of labor and cesarean delivery before 37 weeks gestation have become increasingly common for pregnant women at risk for adverse outcomes, but that these decisions “may be driven, in part, by the

MORE MEDIA WATCH

perception that late-preterm infants are at no greater risk for morbidity and mortality than are term infants.” Studies have recently documented increased morbidity with late-preterm birth, including delayed lung fluid clearance and respiratory distress syndrome, but little has been known about mortality and long-term effects. “The obstetric community is yet to fully embrace the public health impact of late prematurity,” commented Lucky Jain, of Emory University in Atlanta, in an accompanying editorial. Late-preterm infants are often labeled “near term” reflecting the perception that they are functionally mature, he noted, “and there is a relative lack of attention to neonatal considerations when delivery at these gestations is being contemplated.” The findings should “foster debate around the rationale for preterm delivery, particularly when the decision to do so is based on soft indications,” advised Jain. [*Journal of Pediatrics* as reported on Medpage, Nov. ‘07] [Ed note: Findings such as those by Curt Sandman et al.—that the strongest psycho-social predictor of short gestational age is pregnancy-related fears and anxieties—adds an important facet to this story; read on.]

ANXIETY OVER PREGNANCY LINKED TO PREMATURE BIRTH

Women who are particularly anxious about their pregnancy may be at increased risk of premature delivery, a new study suggests. Researchers found that among 1,820 pregnant women, those with the greatest concerns about their pregnancy were nearly three times more likely than those with the least anxiety to deliver prematurely, as reported in the journal *Psychosomatic Medicine*. Stress during pregnancy has been linked to a higher risk of complications in some studies, though not all, and those that have identified a link have not suggested any simple solutions to the problem. For the current study, researchers looked specifically at women’s worries related to their pregnancy, including anxiety over labor and delivery, and worries about early pregnancy problems like bleeding and nausea. The goal was to see whether the risk of pre-term birth was influenced by the types of anxiety that obstetricians can fairly easily address. 1,820 women completed a questionnaire on pregnancy worries during their first visit for prenatal care. The women were asked whether they were anxious about labor and delivery, the health of the baby, nausea, and pain or bleeding during early pregnancy. They were then given anxiety “scores” ranging from 0 to 6. Women who scored a 5 or 6 were at greater risk of pre-term delivery than those with lower scores, and this remained true when the researchers controlled for factors that could both, independently, fuel women’s anxiety *and* raise the risk of pre-term birth, such as a history of problems in past pregnancies, or health problems during the current pregnancy. The findings suggest that excessive anxiety itself may contribute to premature delivery in some women, according to lead author Suzanne Orr at East Carolina University. “If additional research confirms our findings,” they write, “then this might suggest an avenue for intervention to reduce spontaneous pre-term birth. Anxiety is a treatable condition.” They point out that pregnancy-related worries, in particular, can be addressed with education. “Pregnant women could receive information from their healthcare providers about the signs and symptoms of a normal pregnancy and the process of labor and delivery to reduce their worries and concerns about pregnancy, and ultimately their risk of spontaneous pre-term birth outcomes.” [Ed. note: For yet another piece in this elegantly interweaving puzzle, read on.]

SMALLER BABIES MORE PRONE TO DEPRESSION AS ADULTS

People who had a low birth weight were more likely to have depression and anxiety later in life, finds an epidemiological study by Canadian and British researchers. Adverse conditions in the womb that interfere with a baby’s growth may also cause brain differences, the researchers report. Ian Colman of the University of Alberta and colleagues in Britain studied the records of 4,600 Britons born in 1946 who took part in a 40-year study. “We found that even people who had just mild or moderate symptoms of depression or anxiety over their life course were smaller babies than those who had better mental health,” reported Colman. “It suggests a dose-response relationship. As birth weight progressively decreases, it’s more likely that an individual will suffer from mood disorders later in life.” Not all small babies are fated to have poor mental health, the researchers said; it is critical to note that in 1946 records did not indicate whether the children were born prematurely. “Being born small isn’t necessarily a problem. It is a problem if you were born small because of adverse conditions in the womb—and low birth weight is what we looked at in this study because it is considered a marker of stress in the womb,” Colman said. “When a mother is really stressed, blood flow to the

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uterus is restricted and the fetus gets fewer nutrients, which tends to lead to lower birth weight.” The researchers did not look for any absolute weight but said there was a clear trend. “Most notably, the group that had absence of symptoms had the highest birth weight, whereas the group with repeated severe symptoms had the lowest birth weight,” they wrote. “As weight at birth increased, the likelihood of symptoms of depression and anxiety across the life course decreased.” Other studies, such as those by Barker et al., have linked low birth weight to a higher risk of diabetes and heart disease in later life. “I have been asked by many people what the ‘take-home message’ of this study is, and I would say that, in the simplest terms, it is ‘We should take better care of pregnant women,’” Colman said. [*Biological Psychiatry*, as reported on Medpage, Dec. 2007]

Announcements

CALM BIRTH

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Robert Bruce Newman

2008 Schedule

TCT = Teacher Certification Trainings
ICBM = Introduction to the Calm Birth Method

| | | |
|-------------|------|------------------------------|
| April 8 | ICBM | Valley Hospital, Paramus, NJ |
| April 11-14 | TCT | New York City, NY |
| May 9-12 | TCT | Ashland, Oregon |
| Sept 19-21 | TCT | Ashland, Oregon |
| Oct 17-19 | TCT | New York City, NY |

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“Calm Birth is a sublime gift to us all. It contains the blueprint for reconnecting with birth wisdom on all levels. The practices will transform the birth process and imprint a peaceful beginning in both mother and child. The impact of this on society can't be overestimated.”— Christiane Northrup, M.D.

“Calm Birth is the childbirth method that society and I have waited for. It's been a long time coming, a very long time. The program does what is so deeply needed. It heals the earth by healing birth.”— Jeannine Parvati Baker, Midwife, Educator

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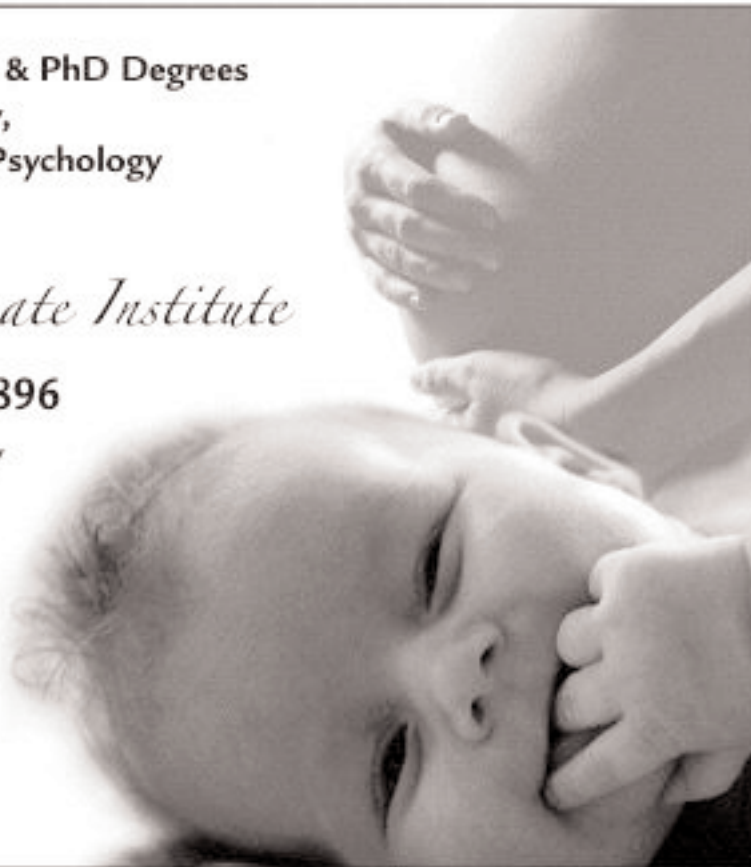
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