



INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF PRENATAL AND PERINATAL PSYCHOLOGY AND MEDICINE (ISPPM)

President: Rupert Linder, M.D.
Goethestraße 9, D-75217 Birkenfeld
phone: +49 (0)7231 482223
fax: +49 (0)7231 472240
e-mail: post@dr-linder.de

Vice-Presidents: Jenő Raffai, Ph.D., psychologist, Hungary
e-mail: RaffaiJ@dunaweb.hu
Natascha Unfried, Dipl.-Med., Germany
e-mail: NatUn@web.de
Past-President: Ludwig Janus, M.D., Germany
E-mail: Lujanus@aol.com

P R E S S R E L E A S E

19. Heidelberg Conference

Love, Pregnancy, Conflict and Solution
(Liebe, Schwangerschaft, Konflikt und Lösung)
investigated the psycho-dynamics of conflict during pregnancy

17.-19.11.2006

Heidelberg – The International Society for Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and Medicine (ISPPM) has concerned itself since 1971 with the emotional life of the unborn. this year's conference, the 19th, in Heidelberg 'Love, Pregnancy, Conflict and Solution' was the occasion of a thorough investigation of the psycho-dynamics of conflict during pregnancy .

In numerous presentations, among others from the fields of embryology and bond analysis, (prenatal) psychotraumatology, gynaecology, birth accompaniment, prenatal medicine, child medicine, and teenager medicine, genealogy, marriage counselling, family and life counselling, psychotherapy and art therapy, it was possible to demonstrate that pre-birth influences on the unborn can have a deep formative influence on their basic sensitivity and their personality development in later stages of life as children, teenagers and adults.

Exposition

In 2005 the Charter of the Child's Rights before during and after Birth was passed by the members at the general meeting.

In a supplementary clause, it was made clear that these rights stand in relation to (and therefore possibly contrary to) the rights of other people, especially those of the mother and the family. (http://www.isppm.de/charta_en.html)

The conference investigated precisely these relationships and contradictions. A bold step, as it thus broke new ground within prenatal psychology.



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Child sacrifice - an age old source of conflict

The killing of unborn and newly-born children, their abandonment and expulsion, the sacrificing of children, and the ruthless destruction of one's own issue have drawn an appalling trail of blood through society - from antiquity up to the present day. In antiquity children were quite often gruesomely killed after birth or abandoned. And in the Bible there are descriptions of child sacrifice (Abraham and Isaac). The conflict in dealing with unwanted pregnancy is therefore extremely old.

Thanks to enlightenment and the awareness of the problem of unwanted pregnancies and the consequences for the mother as well as for the unborn child and the family, better possibilities exist to bring these conflicts to light or to deal with them and so arrive at an effective solution. This was the topic dealt with by the conference..

There are many causes for conflict during pregnancy.

Pregnancy is usually inseparably bound with the erotic relationship between man and woman. Erotic does not, however, as is well known does not always follow the rules of logic. A pregnancy therefore is carried out in the area of conflict of different patterns of relationships between partners, each of whom has an individual history of development and lives in a particular environment

Conflict during pregnancy can already begin with the degree of consequence with which contraception is used. This applies not only to younger women, but can also result in apparently unintentional pregnancies in experienced, older women before the menopause

An additional source of conflict can arise due to changes in society's outlook on life, for pregnancy is not just simply put up with and accepted as the result of sexuality. It is expected rather that the child should be 'perfect'. This is why parents make increasing use of prenatal diagnostic, the technical possibilities of which are being developed ever further. If it is possible to recognise early that an unborn child is imperfect, it can come to ethically difficult questions for the expectant parents and the person caring for them. What used to be considered to be fate has now become a matter of decision.

Conflict during pregnancy can also develop from problems in a partnership, problems during separation and disagreements about family planning, as well as from (possibly trauma-related) embitterment.

Developmental processes during pregnancy.

During the conference impressive case histories were described. These clarify the enormous developmental process undergone by pregnant women; during the pregnancy



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they mature from the child of their own mother to the mother of their own child. At the same time, they come into deep contact in their emotions with their experiences during their own time in the uterus, possibly also the conflicting attitude of the parents to their own conception. Fathers have had similar experiences

130,000 Abortions every year

According to Dr. Rupert Linder, President of the ISPPM, 600 from 1,000 pregnancies last beyond the first 4 weeks. From these 600 pregnancies, 60 end in a spontaneous miscarriage. 18% of the surviving foetus are aborted. In Germany that is about 130,000 every year. The question arose as to how this vast number of children (about which the parents never speak) killed every year affects the socio-psychological state of society, especially as talking about having had an abortion constitutes even nowadays a widely spread social and personal taboo.

Profamilia counsellors described the development of the present legal situation with regard to abortion in Germany, which provides a practicable legal and psychological framework. Pregnant women have nowadays better access than ever before to competent and committed counselling. This would have been unthinkable in the past.

The participants at the conference were agreed unanimously that women have to have the right to decide about the continuation of a pregnancy without having to fear legal consequences. A detailed report about interviews with women and man after abortion got under peoples' skin. The great grief of the affected parents, although years or even decades had passed since the abortion, was extremely obvious to the listeners.

Traumas have Consequences for the Individual and for Society

The children and adults who had survived an attempted abortion were also thought of. Extremely affecting was the report of a very personal story of development: "*Perish or get to the bottom of affliction*". People who have survived an attempted abortion are often destined have the experience that their pre-birth or birth trauma can quite unconsciously repeat itself in life's changes (puberty, marriage and pregnancy), in technical terminology a so-called trauma compensatory behavioural pattern. Quite a few of them are very gifted but none the less 'fail' in everyday life. And quite a few again are unable to reap the fruits of their life's achievements.

Pregnancies can be complicated by the fact that old personal dreams from the time before birth can be revived in the mother or the father by the challenging situation of the pregnancy.

At the conclusion of the conference the opposing poles were brought together: love and hate are connected, the fixation on one pole has a destructive effect. How can anything new develop out of their dialectic tension and flexibility grow?



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Healing in loving acceptance is possible – Prevention very important

As already mentioned, it is helpful for all the people who have suffered early traumas (before, during or up to two years after birth) to receive psychotherapeutic assistance, that takes into prenatal and perinatal aspects. This help should be quickly available and selective. Every form of therapy that encourages artistic expression (for example, music, dance and art therapies), as well as those which regenerate basic regulation and/or stabilise the autonomic nervous system can also be very supportive. The way in which healing in loving acceptance can take effect was demonstrated by a contribution from an art and psychotherapist with a sequence of therapeutic art pictures.

In order to counsel pregnant women and families in conflict situations, it is necessary in any case to provide personal human accompaniment and support, irrespective of the resulting decision.

The Soul's Umbilical Cord - Early Mother-Child Bond

A method which supports the mother in her pre-birth contact to her child and was developed by the Hungarian analysts Jenő Raffai and Györgi Hidas is the so-called bond analysis (published in "*The Soul's Umbilical Cord*"). Today it is known from modern research on infants that the foetus in the womb already responds to the mother as well as to the outer world (and vice versa). Bonds are already created or disrupted at this early phase.

Preventive Measures and Development of Consciousness

In addition, it became clear that it is desirable for children and teenagers to learn in greater detail and more extensively at kindergarten (nursery school) and school about the demanding effect of love and to be prepared for the dynamic of sexual relationships, the means of solving conflicts and the role of mother and father. A consciousness-building, human and loving accompaniment and upbringing of our children and teenagers that can prepare them for life is a challenge for every individual in society. In the future, it could contribute preventively to alleviate, if not save, men, women and couples from such difficult conflicts.

Essen, 11 December, 2006

**Extensive Abstracts of Contributions can be found on the Internet under
www.isppm.de**



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Contact persons:

- **Dr. Rupert Linder**
President of the International Society for Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and Medicine (ISPPM)
Goethestr. 9, D- 75217 Birkenfeld
Telefon: +497231/48 22 23
Telefax: +497231/47 22 40
E-Mail: post@dr-linder.de
Internet: www.isppm.de
- **Dr. Ludwig Janus**
Ex- president of the International Society for Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and Medicine (ISPPM) - 1995-2005
Zähringerstr. 4, D- 69115 Heidelberg
Telefon: +496221/80 16 50
Telefax: +496221/89 22 77
E-Mail: Lujanus@aol.com
Internet: www.isppm.de

Public relations work ISPPM:

- **Gisela Wallbruch – Body psychotherapist.**
Associated committee member of the ISPPM
and
- Executive Partner
giw Gesellschaft für Informationen
aus der und für die Wirtschaft mbH
Kiefernhalde 23, D- 45133 Essen-Bredeney
Telefon: +49201/4 27 45/46, Fax: +49201/42 51 52
E-Mail: gw@giw.de
Internet: www.giw.de

We request a specimen copy be sent to the giw address.