

The 10th IAFMHS Congress
Vancouver
May 25 – 27, 2010



The central theme of the 10th IAFMHS Congress in Vancouver was ‘mental health and forensic practice across the lifespan’. This theme manifested itself most clearly in the keynote speeches.

The first one, by Professor Moretti of Fraser University (Vancouver), pointed out that some children are more sensitive to both positive and negative factors in their development, and not simply to one of the two. Only logical? Yes, sure, but not for most researchers before her. Another interesting point she showed was how important are the transitional stages in the development of children in this respect. Also logical perhaps, but elegantly supported by an army of well-arranged figures. And lastly the assertion that people, starting out as raging little ‘monsters’, actually become less and less violent and aggressive during their lifespan. An obvious truth, unless things go totally wrong of course, but a good one to remember from time to time.

The second keynote, by Professor Straus of the University of New Hampshire, informed us about the fact that women now have more than caught up with their male marital and dating partners when it comes to physical assaults. At all ages! Dating and marriage have obviously become even more dangerous than they used to be.

One of the most interesting symposiums was the one on educational strategies and training in forensic mental health. Some of these approaches were really impressive. National, well-coordinated, state of the art programs to educate all kinds of forensic psychiatric personnel (e.g. in Scotland). Why don’t we have something like that in the Netherlands?

Of course there were also less impressive papers and symposiums. Strange research questions, inconclusive results, presentations which were remarkably similar to previous ones in other congresses, and so on. Well, that is not completely unusual in these gatherings and, to be honest, we have seen far worse.

And then there were, at last, the two symposiums about the long-term forensic psychiatric care (LFPC), coordinated by the EFP. An overview of the latest developments in LFPC in England, Germany, Belgium and The Netherlands. A logical sequel to several previous expert meetings. We all still had to fine-tune our presentations, which, somewhat unexpectedly, exposed us to Vancouver's wild life. Working on our laptops in a room overlooking down-town Vancouver and Vancouver Harbour, we witnessed how an eagle was attacked and scared away by a group of seagulls. Interesting, very, but did it mean anything? Probably. But what? In the end, the symposiums were well attended, well received, and the LFPC network got extended again.

All in all, the congress successfully presented the state of the art in forensic mental health services. The theme of the 11th IAFMHS congress, which will be held in Barcelona on June 29 – July 1, 2011, is 'towards integrated prevention'. Another challenge to look forward to!

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