

THE ASANTE CENTRE
for fetal alcohol syndrome

The Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Society for British Columbia,
Governing body of The Asante Centre Vol V, No 2.

April 2011

The Asante Centre Hosts Professional Visitors from New Zealand and France

In keeping with the Asante Centre's mandate of prevention and education about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), the Centre played host and teacher recently to a group of professionals from New Zealand and the French Reunion Islands.

From March 8th to 10th, following the 4th International Conference on FASD in Vancouver, seven professionals from New Zealand and two from the Reunion Islands joined the staff at the Asante Centre to observe our family-centred assessment methods. In addition to realizing the important behind-the-scenes work of Audrey Salahub (Executive Director) and the information gathering of the clerical staff, the pediatricians, psychologists and speech-language pathologists were able to observe and participate in the assessments of two clients who were referred to us. Where possible, the visitors were able to talk to the caregivers and clients directly, or observe proceedings on TV monitors.

The teams were able to discuss at length the assessment methods and procedures with Dr. Julianne Conry (psychologist), Kristal Bodaly and Jamie Hack (speech-language pathologists) and Dr. Kwadwo Asante, Dr. Heather Kee and Dr. Debbie Hewes (pediatricians). We learned about the patterns of alcohol use and FASD-related problems in New Zealand and the Reunion Islands, especially the unwillingness of the French to acknowledge the problems of FASD! We appreciated the difficulties in getting assessment centres started in their countries and hoped that their attendance in our Centre has helped to make identification and assistance to individuals and families with FASD-related problems less devastating than it has been for them in the past.

Dr. Kwadwo Ohene Asante, Medical Director



The Asante Centre 1st Annual Spin-A-Thon Fundraising Event a Huge Success!

The Centre would like to extend a heart-felt thank you to the communities of Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows for helping make the first annual Asante Centre Spin-A-Thon a huge success! The event raised over \$16,000 for the Centre to help establish Minga Marketplace, our new outlet for FASD resources. While there were too many supporters involved to name individually, we would like to specially recognize the organizing committee, the energetic instructors, the twelve team captains and riders, and each of the generous donors who contributed time, materials and funds to the event's success. The proceeds will go far to support the Asante Centre and the work we do for individuals with FASD. We look forward to the energy and dedication again in the new year! For a full list of sponsors, please visit the Asante Centre website.



If you would like to be removed from the newsletter mailing list, please contact the Asante Centre at newsletter@asantecentre.org.

Mark Your Calendars

Parent Education Group: Ridge Meadows Child Development Centre and the Asante Centre
January 26, 2011–June 15, 2011
The Asante Centre, Maple Ridge
<http://www.asantecentre.org/news.html>

The C.R.E.W.: Inclusive Social and Learning Group for Young Men aged 17–26 with FASD
April 14, 2011–June 23, 2011
Chuck Bailey Recreation Centre, Surrey
<http://www.asantecentre.org/news.html>

Naming the Elephants in the Room: Ethics in a Multi-Cultural Society
April 28, 2011, 4:00–6:00 pm
Sunny Hill Health Centre, Vancouver
<http://www.asantecentre.org/news.html>

Stand Together 2011: Multi-Faceted Training for Caregiving Professionals
April 29, 2011–April 30, 2011
Executive Airport Plaza Hotel, Richmond
<http://www.asantecentre.org/news.html>

International FASD Awareness Day
September 9th, 2011
Time to start planning your local events!

Dr. Asante Has Caught the Bug!

Dr. Asante, who continues to tell the Centre that he is semi-retired, has decidedly caught the FASD bug. While supposedly relaxing in Mexico for the winter, he could not pass up the opportunity to speak to the local Rotary Club on the dangers of alcohol exposure in utero and the effects on a developing fetus. A champion of the field even during his time "off", the Centre is very fortunate to have Dr. Asante back, sharing his wisdom and lessons learned.



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4th International Conference on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

The 4th International Conference on FASD—"The Power of Knowledge: Integrating Research, Policy, and Promising Practice Around the World" was held in early March in Vancouver, examining FASD research, prevention and intervention efforts from across the globe. There were fourteen countries represented amongst the nearly 1100 participants, exemplifying the tremendous growth the field has experienced in the last four decades. Sessions examined an exceptional variety of topics, with a focus on research related to prenatal alcohol exposure, the effects on the fetus, implications for individuals living with the impacts, and strategies for mitigating the effects through support and interventions.

It seems the more we learn about prenatal alcohol exposure, the more we realize how much there is yet to know. One of the most exciting and also concerning topics presented, in terms of its possible implications, was the emerging field of epigenetics. Epigenetics, or the "science of individuality" as coined by Dr. Kobor of UBC, is the study of gene expression. While each of us is born with a pre-determined genetic code or DNA sequence, environmental factors prenatally and postnatally such as diet and stress, can determine how those genes are manifested. Presenters described each genome as a dimmer switch—the "light" can be turned on, turned off, or dimmed to any level on the spectrum. Research is exploring pre-conception alcohol exposure as a possible explanation for some of the multi-generational effects we see on human development, including paternal and grandmaternal substance use. Findings could potentially have groundbreaking and far-reaching impacts on the way we view prevention of FASD.

Other subject highlights included discussion on sleep disorders as a diagnostic criteria due to noted pervasiveness, examination of prevalence rates from studies in various countries, the continuous search for a biomarker of alcohol exposure, exploration of social determinants as risk factors for alcohol consumption, neuroplasticity and potential cognitive intervention therapies, the implications of FASD across systems, and much more. Many of the presentations' PowerPoint slides can now be accessed online using the following address for UBC Interprofessional Continuing Education: <http://interprofessional.ubc.ca/FASD.htm>.

Success will never be a big step in the future; success is a small step taken just now.

Jonathan Martensson, Sweden

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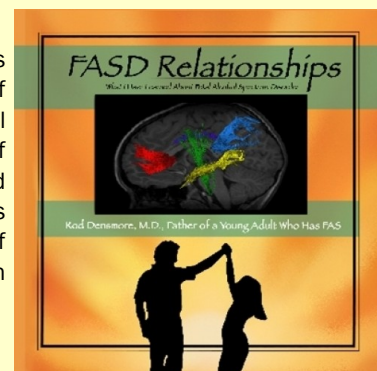
"FASD Relationships: What I Have Learned About Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder" by Rod Densmore, M.D.

Rod Densmore offers a unique perspective on FASD-related issues as both a medical practitioner and a parent of a young adult with FASD. With the intention of adding a practical, well-referenced, accessible, engaging and inexpensive teaching tool to existing resources, Densmore has successfully compiled research findings on a large variety of topics relevant to FASD and translated them into user-friendly language. He addresses the complexity of these issues through the expertise of a medical professional, yet with the sensitivity and passion that comes from parenting a person with FASD.

FASD Relationships includes a book and five DVD set, with each chapter of the book forming a series of modules about FASD. While the chapters build on each other, most can be used as stand-alone topics addressing common strengths and challenges for individuals exposed to alcohol prenatally. Densmore looks at both prevention and intervention concepts from a positive and proactive position, addressing commonly discussed concerns and areas of new research, including emerging fields such as epigenetics and neuroplasticity. The text offers practical considerations for approaching concerns like crisis management, suicide, trauma, and emotional regulation in the contexts of primary characteristics and secondary disabilities.

Through a combination of text, video and narrated PowerPoint slides, FASD Relationships examines topics such as the basics of FASD, genetics and FASD, sensory processing, neurobiology of FASD, neurobiology of attachment, brain development, music therapy, the value of relationships through attachment and social connection neuroscience, epidemiology of FASD, and FASD resources. Densmore incorporates a variety of voices of FASD stakeholders, including an interview with Myles Himmelreich, an adult with FASD, and narratives from family members, caregiving professionals and service providers. Densmore incorporates information from many previously existing resources, examining and building upon them in the context of FASD. Topics covered are largely intended for a general audience, with certain sections designed for health professionals and those with keen interest in those specific perspectives.

FASD Relationships is available for purchase through Minga Marketplace on the Asante Centre website.



The subject matter contained in this newsletter does not necessarily represent the opinions and ideas of the Asante Centre. The Centre does not endorse or guarantee any information, products or services discussed, and cannot be held responsible for the use or misuse of its contents.

What can you do? Become a member of the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Society for British Columbia!

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Your Charitable Donations are appreciated.

Donation (tax receipt provided): _____

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

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