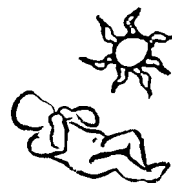


# Well Mother Newsletter

March 2006, number 8



## **Letter from Suzanne**

Welcome to the annual newsletter. I hope you all had a wonderful 2005 and are ready for the successes and challenges of 2006. It's been great to keep up to date with many of you during the year through the increasing number of email contacts I have for you. If I don't have your email, please can you give it to me - I often send out information through the year.

The Web-based Discussion Group finally seems to be getting underway, but the more people who join it, the livelier it will become! If you haven't already joined, and you have attended one of my courses, please do. It is a great learning and support resource - log onto:  
[www.wellmother.org/messageboard](http://www.wellmother.org/messageboard)

I hope in 06 and 07 to start some new courses, that I have had in mind to teach for a while. The first one of these is the **Massage for Labour** course. I began my Teacher Training Programme in January, so you may see some of the trainee teachers with me as assistants on various courses.

I'm really looking forward to the Residential in Stroud in June. I've found the days I've taught (including the teacher training), where we have had a mixed group of midwives, shiatsu practitioners and massage therapists have provided fertile ground for the sharing of approaches and techniques.

With all the new courses this year, I thought the theme of this newsletter could be Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

I'm including an article by Lizzie Ruffell about an additional skill which she is finding useful, and a course I have been wanting to do

for a while. I am also including part of Emma Napier's impressive project in which she looks at how she has developed as a massage therapist not only through working with others, but also through being on the pregnancy journey herself.

I hope to see many of you during this year and hope you continue to enjoy your work and feel as inspired about it as I do.

*Suzanne*



## **CPD – what is it and why is it important**

There has been a lot written about this in various professional magazines recently. As part of my teacher training course, I am getting people to make a 3 year CPD plan. I think it is something we can all do. I made my first plan during my 2 year PGCE (teacher training) course in 2000 and it makes interesting reading to look back at it now and review what I have achieved of my aims. I found it a useful exercise to do and continue with.

Essentially it is about analysing where we are at and where we want to be within a specified time. It is something we probably all do to some extent in an informal way. We think about the kind of courses we want to attend and how we see our work developing. A CPD plan helps us to be more specific about it and set ourselves

goals. It helps us look at the broader picture of the support we need to attend courses, and other ways of supporting our professional growth. Reading and reflecting on an article, or keeping a reflective journal are other ways.

I hope that Well Mother can support you in your growth as maternity care specialists. I believe my courses offer a foundation on which you can build. You will find, like I do, that there is always something more to learn, another phase in the journey. That is what makes it all so exciting. We never stand still and my best teachers are my clients and my students

## **Course News: New Courses. Massage for Labour Support**

As you know the 4 day course is very intensive and although we do some work on labour and postnatal care, I always feel it is not enough. I am now going to offer the chance of further study to massage therapists that have completed my Diploma course.

I am hoping to get it recognised by Doula UK so that you will be able to be registered as a doula after completing this course (I am also applying for this for the shiatsu module).

## **CPD events**

I have decided to change the format of the CPD days this year, especially as we have the 4 day Residential Gathering. I am getting some outside teachers to come in and share their knowledge with us. I think this will be a great opportunity to expand your knowledge, so please book up soon.

There is a separate flier included with more information on these special CPD days/events for those

who have already attended a Well Mother course:-

**Residential Gathering, open to all who have done a Well Mother course.**

Hawkwood College, Stroud, Glos  
June 18-22 2006.  
([www.hawkwoodcollege.co.uk](http://www.hawkwoodcollege.co.uk))

**The Chiropractic Approach to Pregnancy**

**(Friday) 16<sup>th</sup> June, Bristol**

A day with Nina Hollingsworth to deepen your knowledge of soft tissue techniques and understand how chiropractors view pregnancy.

**Deepening your Knowledge of the Pelvis**

**(Wed/Thurs) 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> October, London**

A day and a half with Caroline Barrow who runs "College of Body Science" more info on the website ([www.collegeofbodyscience.com](http://www.collegeofbodyscience.com)).

Some of my students have done Caroline's "Science of Mothering" course to consolidate their knowledge of the anatomy and physiology of pregnancy. Her next course on this is April 26-27 in London. This is open to anyone.

**The College of Body Science – Mothering Science, reviewed by Sam Coultart, Well Mother pregnancy massage therapist**

An excellent addition to the Pregnancy Massage, in fact a 'must' for anyone serious about working with pregnant women. This course offers an in-depth look at pregnancy from the menstrual cycle to birth. A clear insight into how the body changes through each trimester – circulation, respiration, hormones and the way the baby develops within the uterus while all these changes are happening. Caroline, who runs the course brings a level of enthusiasm and knowledge to the course which makes you think about what you know and brings the subject to life!

**The effects of shiatsu on post-term pregnancy: using an audit to establish a research base**

I'm pleased to let you know that finally we have managed to get an audit carried out at my local maternity hospital published: in *Complementary Therapies in Medicine*, volume 13, issue 1, March 2005, pages 11-15. You can in fact view the whole article, including references on the website [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com). The article is entitled "The effects

of shiatsu on post-term pregnancy by Jennifer Ingram (research officer), Celina Domagala (the midwife) and me, Suzanne Yates.

For me it is exciting as it puts shiatsu in the news and shows how safe and effective it can be during pregnancy. It also shows what a valuable self help tool it is – that some aspects of shiatsu can be shown to midwives, and also parents, and that they are able to use it themselves both safely and effectively. Finally it shows how important it is for us as practitioners to keep good records of the work that we do, so that we can ultimately present our findings to underpin research. This is an important part of our CPD.

I also wrote a longer article about this in the Shiatsu Society Newsletter, Winter 05 if you would like more information on this.

**Maya Abdominal Massage (MAM) by Lizzie Ruffell, Well mother pregnancy massage therapist and doula, Oxford**

Women in Central America have been massaging their wombs as part of daily practice for thousands of years. Handed down from mother to daughter, generation after generation it has helped to ensure their pelvic health. 30 years ago Rosita Arvigo moved to Belize in Central America and apprenticed with one of the last of the Maya shaman, Don Eljio Panti, until his death aged 104. During this time he imparted to her his knowledge of the healing plants of the rainforest, the ancient abdominal massage techniques and of working with the ancient Maya spirits for spiritual healing. Rosita has combined everything that Don Eljio taught her with her own knowledge as a Doctor of naprapathy: a branch of chiropractic treatment founded by Dr. Oakley. He discovered that a good portion of back, neck and joint pain was the result of the improper balance and alignment of the connective tissues such as the muscles, tendons and ligaments. In 1905 he developed a method to diagnose and treat these imbalances through the gentle, manual manipulation of the connective tissues - naprapathy. You can find out more about it at [www.naprapathicmedicine.edu](http://www.naprapathicmedicine.edu).)

Western medicine has not recognised as yet how important the health of the abdomen, and in particular the positioning of the uterus, is to women's health. It is estimated that as many as 80% of women have a displaced or fallen uterus. The uterus is suspended by ligaments, which allow it to stretch and grow during pregnancy. As it is not directly attached to any other structure in the pelvis, it can move out of position very easily. Some common reasons for a uterus becoming displaced include falls at any time of life, car accidents, wearing high heels, walking barefoot on cold floors, carrying heavy burdens during menstruation and too soon after childbirth, difficult labour and birth and emotional armouring from rape or sexual abuse.

When the uterus is out of position the vital flow of blood, lymph, nerve impulse and chi to the pelvic area is compromised. It can also cause pooling of blood and uterine lining within the womb, which would normally be expelled during menstruation. This pooling can lead to abnormal growth within the uterus and menstrual cramping. Other conditions that have their root cause in a displaced uterus include infertility, menstrual problems, difficult menopause, ovarian cysts, fibroids, endometriosis, polycystic ovary syndrome, recurrent miscarriage, premature labour and weak newborns. The list goes on...

Rosita's training teaches a simple, external and non-invasive massage technique performed on the abdomen and back to help to bring the uterus back into its proper position, soften musculature, release tension in the diaphragm, align the pelvis and release muscular armouring in the trunk. This has the effect of enhancing circulation of blood and lymphatic fluids, elimination and secretion of hormones, therefore re-establishing homeostasis in the pelvic area and surrounding organs. All of these are essential for healthy conception, pregnancy and delivery. When the diaphragm is tight it can constrict blood flow to the lower half of the body by as much as 40% which is a factor in varicose veins, aching, tingling legs and sore feet and heels. As the oesophagus passes through the diaphragm, constriction will also lead to digestive problems including chronic indigestion and heartburn. If the pelvis is misaligned it will be hampering the flow of nerve

impulse to the lower abdominal area as the main nerves, which enervate the area, pass through the sacral foramen. When the pelvis is misaligned it can also affect the position that the baby will find it comfortable to lie in during pregnancy. It could also be a cause of the uterus being displaced.

The training is very comprehensive and works on the physical, emotional and spiritual level helping bring the body back into balance and harmony. Practitioners have reported as much as 50% success rate for natural conception when working with couples experiencing fertility problems and many a woman has managed to save her uterus from hysterectomy through rigorous self-care and professional treatment.

I found the training to be very inspiring and it deepened my knowledge and understanding of the pelvic area and physical and emotional health as a whole. As well as doing specific Maya treatments I have been able to bring a lot of the individual techniques into my other work as a masseuse with good success. One of the things I like most about the work is that there is a big emphasis on getting clients to do self-care – massaging their own belly on a daily basis to aid healing with support from professional instruction. This enables women to empower themselves around their health and not just pass it over to others. The abdomen has been ignored for too long and it is time that as a society we start to recognise the importance of health within this area. The technique is also useful for men as it helps to guard against prostate cancer and protects their pelvic and sexual health.



Case history: BF had a client, K, who came to her at 20 weeks expecting twins. She had already had 2 births both of which had been traumatic for her. She was having trouble connecting with the twins as she felt that they were spending all their time

bonding with each other. K had 1 MAM treatment and was rigorous with her self-care for the rest of the pregnancy. After the birth she reported back that doing her self-care really helped her to connect with twins. She had a 4 hour labour, both twins were head down and born 7 minutes apart, twin 1 weighing 9lbs and twin 2 weighing 7lbs. The midwife commented how well the uterus contracted down. K attributed the difference in this birth experience to the MAM and the self-care.

*www.arvigomassage.com.*  
*If anyone would like to experience a treatment (in Oxford), I can offer any of Suzanne's students a discounted session of £50, normally £70. Please contact me, Lizzie Ruffell on 01865-515025 or e-mail lizzieflow@hotmail.com.*  
*There should be a self-care workshop in May, a pre-requisite for those wanting to study MAM: contact: Helen Rohlicek EmotionalRepair@aol.com*

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**The Role of a Maternity Care Massage Therapist, excerpts from Emma Napier's (Wellington, New Zealand angus\_em@paradise.net.nz) project**

Massage is a complementary therapy and, as its name suggests, can certainly not replace, although can stand beside, standard maternity care. Testing blood and urine, checking the foetal heart rate and rate of growth and keeping an eye on any signs of complications of pregnancy are all important areas of standard maternity care which should not be missed out. But pregnancy is not just a physical process and, although the mother may take heart from the tests and checks, a more multi dimensional approach to care would provide a complete system. The extent to which women receive support for the physical discomforts and the mental / emotional and spiritual sides of their pregnancies is very dependable on their maternity care providers (LMC) and the people around them – most of whom have been through the very system that they are now in. Of all the pregnant women that I have worked within the last six months, they have been satisfied with their LMCs but it has been their massage sessions that they have treasured. They have been able to physically and mentally relax and take time out, in a nurturing environment, to acknowledge and accept their changing bodies, the work that they are doing, and the life within

them. Minor physical discomforts have been eased, allowing the women to feel "normal" again and to have the strength to carry on. One client uses the session as a time, when away from all other distractions, she can truly "tune in" to her body and take away a picture of where she is at and what she needs to do to find balance again. It is quite common, when pregnant women are providing so much nurturing for their unborn baby, for pregnant clients to comment on feeling valued and cared for themselves through receiving massage – not a sentiment shared with having to do another urine test or a physical examination!

From our first awareness of boundaries of self brought to us by the stimulation of nerve endings in our skin by the surrounding amniotic fluid as a growing foetus, touch is an important aspect to our lives. A natural instinct which allows us to explore and interact with the world around us, we can communicate, show affection and comfort one another with touch. Rubbing a sore knee better or stroking someone's back as they pore out their worries and sadness all bring relief and a message of caring. In this respect, I see massage therapy as the most accessible of all complementary therapies, a tool that we all instinctively possess and readily use – a first time client to massage therapy will often comment that they've never received a professional massage before, but have received "rubs" from family or friends. More people appear to use massage therapy than any other complementary therapy and certainly I have seen this with many of my own clients, for whom massage is their first adventure out of the orthodox health system. Therefore, as massage therapists, I believe that we are in a prime position, to not just treat with our own massage skills, but to also expand people's awareness and understanding, enable them to take charge of their own health and connect to their own inner wisdom through offering complementary knowledge and education for a truly holistic approach to our practices.

With the philosophy of complementary therapies fitting in so well with the midwifery model of maternity care, and yet few women seeking to use them and

few midwives able to advise on them (not part of the national education programme and only followed through individual interest), our pregnant clients' overall care and well-being could be greatly enhanced by our own personal knowledge / skills of other therapies too or at least our ability to recommend other avenues to be explored. Within the last six months of undertaking these studies, I have met several pregnant women who have become empowered through simple advice supplied in addition to receiving massage work.

Lisa, newly pregnant and not yet assigned to a LMC was almost afraid to eat for fear of harming the baby – providing her with an article on nutritional guidelines quickly provided her with new found courage.

Paula had described her symptoms of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome to her midwife, who had acknowledged them as discomforts of pregnancy but provided no further advice! The discomfort levels were increasing and she was finding sleeping and general tasks more difficult. Armed with an explanation of what was happening to her physically (which in itself seemed to lift her spirit, rather than think the worst) as well as advice on stretching, resting arms up, use of splints to keep wrists straight for periods of time, taking B vitamins (particularly B6) and the H6 shiatsu / acupressure point, the despondency left her and she felt self sufficient again – "I can finally do something for myself".

As already briefly discussed in a previous section, a pregnancy involves three people – the mother, the unborn child and the father – and maternity care should, in my view, encompass all of these players and their relationships. I have commented on the way that complementary therapies can aid a father individually as well as play a role in the bond of the family. As a massage therapist with a good knowledge of your own therapy's skills in relation to maternity care, as well as further skills or understanding of other complementary therapies, you will be able to provide an avenue for a father to form a connection to his unborn child and strengthen the bond with his partner and to himself.

During my case studies, I have been fortunate to work with three

fathers, directly and indirectly. One father, Alex, I met two weeks before his baby was due. This particular pregnancy had been conceived through IVF and was very much in the hands of the specialist. I felt from Alex, on meeting him, that although he very much wanted this baby and to be part of its life, up to this stage he had felt as though he was an onlooker. His wife had encouraged him to come and learn some techniques for labour, having heard positive stories on the effects of using acupressure points for pain relief. By the end of the session, Alex was looking forward to the labour, feeling that he would be of use and comfort to his wife and their baby during the process and realising that even if the baby was delivered by Caesarean, he could calm his wife through holding H8 acupressure point on her hands.

The second father, Alan, came on several occasions to learn massage techniques to use during the pregnancy and for during labour. Within these sessions, I also included some simple breathing exercises which allowed for the mother to relax with Alan whilst both connected to the baby by laying hands on abdomen and visualising. Again, Alan went away with a sense of partnership in the pregnancy, a physical and energetic connection to the baby and tools to provide relief to his partner's discomforts.

The third father, Robert, I haven't even met. His wife, Ann, is in the first half of her pregnancy and has experienced the usual discomforts of neck tension/ headaches and constipation. During her sessions I have applied and shown her cranial holds and reflexology techniques for the intestines, from which she has received much relief. I have then encourage her to share these tools with her husband and allow him to take care of her. Ann has reported that Robert now frequently asks her if she needs any treatment, just so that he can help, and is taking a very positive interest in the development of the baby and Ann's body.

Before I became pregnant, it always amazed me that the pregnant clients that I saw didn't surround themselves with self help and pregnancy books and find out about carpal tunnel syndrome and natural ways to handle ease the discomforts, abdominal breathing exercises, or use of Bach Flower Remedies. I

understood that not everyone was a sponge for information but when these women were so into their pregnancies, I was surprised that they weren't more proactive. Now that I am, myself, pregnant, I think I'm beginning to understand. Coping with tiredness, fluctuating hormones and their effects and the physical and emotional changes of pregnancy, trying to maintain the normality of life with work, relationships and the house, bonding and nurturing with the life and spirit within and dealing with the enthusiasm of others and that the pregnancy becomes the only topic of conversation, I just want someone else to look after me and provide me with the tools and solutions to make the journey one of well-being, discovery and empowerment. This is the role that I believe to be of the massage therapist in maternity care.



### **Well Mother mission**

#### **Aim**

To support the wisdom of parents and babies by promoting the use of bodywork, especially massage, shiatsu and exercise, as a core part of 21<sup>st</sup> century maternity care.

#### **Objectives**

1. Provide training in massage and shiatsu for holistic maternity care for midwives, shiatsu & massage therapists, childbirth educators, and other relevant health professionals.
2. Support the links between all of the above groups through newsletters, conferences and other forms of networking.
3. Carry out research & support research into the use of massage and shiatsu in maternity care.
4. Publish articles, leaflets and books on massage and shiatsu in maternity care.
5. Provide classes and individual support for women, their partners and their babies in the maternity period.

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