

I.N. Touch

August 2020

EDITOR'S NOTE

In touch with each other, internationally – In touch with each other within the chapters – In touch with the center of our IAIM flower: all the families, parents and babies out there.

Facing this time of social distancing, being forced to stay home, not knowing how long this is going to be or how life will go on, some of us have plenty of time while others are working hard to survive.

Again others start being creative, e.g. teaching online classes, because some of us urgently need to follow up the support for their class participants, while others need to continue working, because it is crucial to survive financially.

What is the situation in your country? How are you? We are ready to receive your answers, stories, feelings, or for whatever you would like to share.

Let's keep I.N.Touch.

There is no right or wrong, as nobody of us faced a situation like this before, we guess, global pandemic scenario, which stops and changes our lives, globally. What are the values of our system? What is important now? IAIM is not political, has no religion, but we are living the highest values of RESPECT and LOVE. On every level. IAIM has a big role to play for families, now maybe more than ever before, because being forced to stay home, is giving life in plenty of ways, how families are dealing with it.

RESPECT to the Circle of Trainers, who started discussing the possibilities of how to reach out to families through the possibilities of 21st century technology- RESPECTING what we all know is the best in life: teaching infant massage only face to face, will never be replaced by online classes. Never. So they did create a curriculum, especially for that time.

RESPECT to the IAIM Board, carrying on the voluntary work in general and preparing an online GA, for coming together and finding solutions together.

Because we do RESPECT the needs of families, to meet and to exchange, to share ideas and feelings, our strongest value of "parents parenting together" can be fulfilled by these guidelines the IAIM Trainers had created.

All the CIMIs out there, mirroring the IAIM, we invite you to share how you experience teaching in a different way during these different times. How did you feel about that? What feedback did you get from the parents? How was the atmosphere? Are you looking forward to meeting in person, face to face, again?

Plenty of questions, plenty of feelings, even more challenges for everyone. Stop. Take a deep breath. IAIM – Chapters – Trainers – CIMIs – Boards around the globe – let's keep I.N.Touch.

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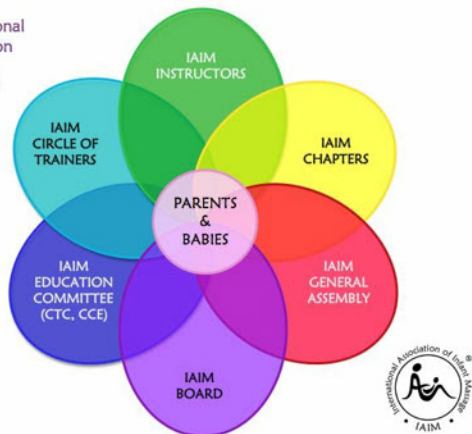
- South Africa
- Mexico
- New Zealand
- Jordan
- Singapore
- USA
- Russia
- Germany
- Portugal

If you propose to speak, ask yourself

- is it true
- is it necessary
- is it kind?

With respect, your IAIM Newsletter Committee: Patricia, Ronel, Isolde and Filipa





From the Board

Dear IAIM Community,

This year seems to have flown passed in spite of lockdown for most of us on the planet.

We hope that you and your families are all well and safe.

In unprecedented times as we now experience, it is our moral duty to do our best to stay connected and united in our collective mission.

As you all are aware, the General Assembly will be held virtually. This is going to be very different and we have never done something like this before. Like everything else that is changing in this world of ours, these are new waters for us. We are and always will hopefully be a face to face association and at the moment, we are requested to find a way to communicate with the help of technology.

In several countries, parents and baby classes and IAIM trainings had to be put on hold. Now we are hearing that in some countries, some face to face classes with parents are starting again. We are pleased to hear that. Trainings are also reemerging, and trainers follow all strict rules that their local authorities have put into place.

We are all very aware and the first ones to say how human face to face contact is fundamental for the well-being of humans.

The finances of IAIM are challenged, as we are sure they are in your countries too, as the Trainers usually bring in a lot of revenue for IAIM. It is quite an exercise for us to work on a realistic budget, but we will certainly try our best as usual. We give a special thanks to Sofia, our financial officer, who is excellent in asking good questions to guide the International board in the budget gymnastic. We are becoming experts in stretching!

The agenda and the relevant information will be sent to all the Chapters in a few weeks' time.

We will also send you the biennial report that we will invite you all to read with attention, as it is the work that the International board has done for IAIM, according to the needs for its growth and health. Please can you all read everything that will be sent to you very carefully and respond if necessary, including all the contracts that are revised for better protection of IAIM.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the International Board members for their very hard work and dedication to IAIM.

Everybody has spent untold voluntary hours and it is greatly appreciated. It is with sadness that the International Board has to say good bye to Sylvie, Gloria and Claudio. Words are not enough for me to express personally how amazing it has been to have their guidance and support for the past four years.

Thank you to the whole of the IAIM community for your dedication and support and most of all for your trust in us the International Board.

Respectfully Always,

Margo Kilborn

IAIM International President.

MAGIC MOMENTS

With a very special student, Diana

BY THORDIS & ISOLDE

Diana, a 21 year old student wanted to become an Infant Massage Instructor. It does happen sometimes that very young women get in contact with IAIM. What is different and very special is that Diana has Trisomie 21.

Ana Laura, a Mexican trainer candidate asked if Diana could participate in her independent training in Cholula Puebla Mexico. This question was given to the Circle of Trainers. We wanted to know if any of the other Trainers had trained students with special needs.

Merce from Spain and Juliana from US both shared their experiences and offered support. We were empowered to welcome Diana. She registered and she took the training with her Mother Dolores.

Diana's motivation

Diana already had some work experience with babies and children with special needs, working as a massage therapist. The reason why she wanted to become an IAIM infant massage instructor, is that she wants to empower and teach parents, to massage and communicate with their babies with trisomie 21.

Her relationship to her mother and her role in the group

From the first day of the training we felt that the relationship between Diana and her Mum was very warm hearted from both sides. They were very close to each other.

During the first day, she stayed close to her mother's side. She experienced acceptance and support from all students and Ana Laura. She felt free to connect with the group. Diana is empathetic and she showed social competences in several situations in a very special way.

All participants were impressed by this young woman's attitude. Doubts, if she will be able to participate in the instructor training as all the other students and if she will be able to teach parents in infant massage, were blown away in a flash.

During the baby massage stroke review, she behaved towards her doll with love and respect. Diana is a wonderful role model for parents in more than one way. She will empower parents with babies with different needs. She is an example of how well

these children may develop with trust and support from their parents and their environment.

The whole group was able to experience Diana's social and emotional abilities. She was focused in the communication with her doll, she stayed calm, friendly and always showed awareness for the group and personal needs of the other participants.

This impressed her fellow students and made this group, with very different backgrounds and professional experiences, grow close together and work well.

IAIM can make the difference!

A very special learning process took place with the presentation of core curriculum points and demonstration of the strokes. It was not about teaching, presenting or getting more knowledge. Little experiences, special moments implemented feelings of belonging, confidence and astonishment. Many changes were made, guided by intuition, trust, attentiveness and love.

Ana Laura showed the YouTube video „playa y montaña“. This video tells the story about a couple who expect a baby and this baby has trisomie 21. They explain their situation by comparing how it is to plan a travel to the beach and what it was like, when they were stopped and had to drive to the mountains. This video shows very emotional how different life can sometimes be...

After seeing this video Dolores (Diana's mother) said:

„This story is our story. It is 21 years ago and I feel it like it is day 1.

I was on the mountain without boots and clothes. I was there in sandals and swimsuit. I wanted to be at the beach. I was alone and depressed. I became angry when everyone looked at my baby and nobody looked at me. Today I understand moms in this situation. But, the air on the mountain is clean. The beach is not always clean. Very slowly happiness came.“

Dolores started to cry and her daughter Diana sat close to her and listened to her mother's words. She got up, fetched a tissue and tea for her mother and said „I do not want to see my mother sad“.

MAGIC MOMENTS...continued

With a very special student, Diana

Dolores answered: "I'm happy to be here and that we talk about that now. We can bring awareness." This situation was amazing, powerful, full of new feelings and a learning experience that can't be planned to be taught.

After this „special moment“, several students expressed their own experiences with family members with trisomie 21. Some in tears told:

Student 1:

„In my family that is different. When we are together we pretend that my cousin with trisomie 21 is not there, it is as if she would not exist.“ In tears she said: „I wish this would be different for my cousin “.

Student 2:

„The same happens in our family. When my cousin was born the father left the mother, she is a single mother. There is no help, the doctors are also not sensitive...“

„We all can feel your love and the love in your daughter. We see that Diana feels good. I wish this for my cousin, to be able to feel that too“

„Diana can feel good. She can enjoy and give a lot back to society.“ Dolores „The process is very slow, it took years...“

Student 3:

„I admire you. You helped her become independent“

Dolores: „I'm thankful that REMI opened the door for us, most doors stay closed. Only sometime doors are opened – a little bit- REMI (Mexican chapter of IAİM) is different.“

Ana Laura: „You are welcome you are part of the program we experienced it together in our circle.“

In this training we all were able to see that mother/family love can make the difference. In this IAİM training all participants experienced special moments and were inspired.

During these 4 days we were allowed to observe, perceive to get a picture of a very special relationship full of love, acceptance and touch. Dolores shared her feelings during her and her family's process. And we could watch and wonder, about Diana's distinctive social and emotional abilities. She will be a wonderful role model and she has a big gift to give to parents who are expecting or have a child with additional special needs and special abilities too.

Thank you Dolores and Diana, for being with REMI. Thank you Ana Laura for inviting Diana in your instructor training and to all students, who got inspiration to make changes within their personal life and with infant massage with REMI. Thank you Isolde for assisting with the translating of this article.

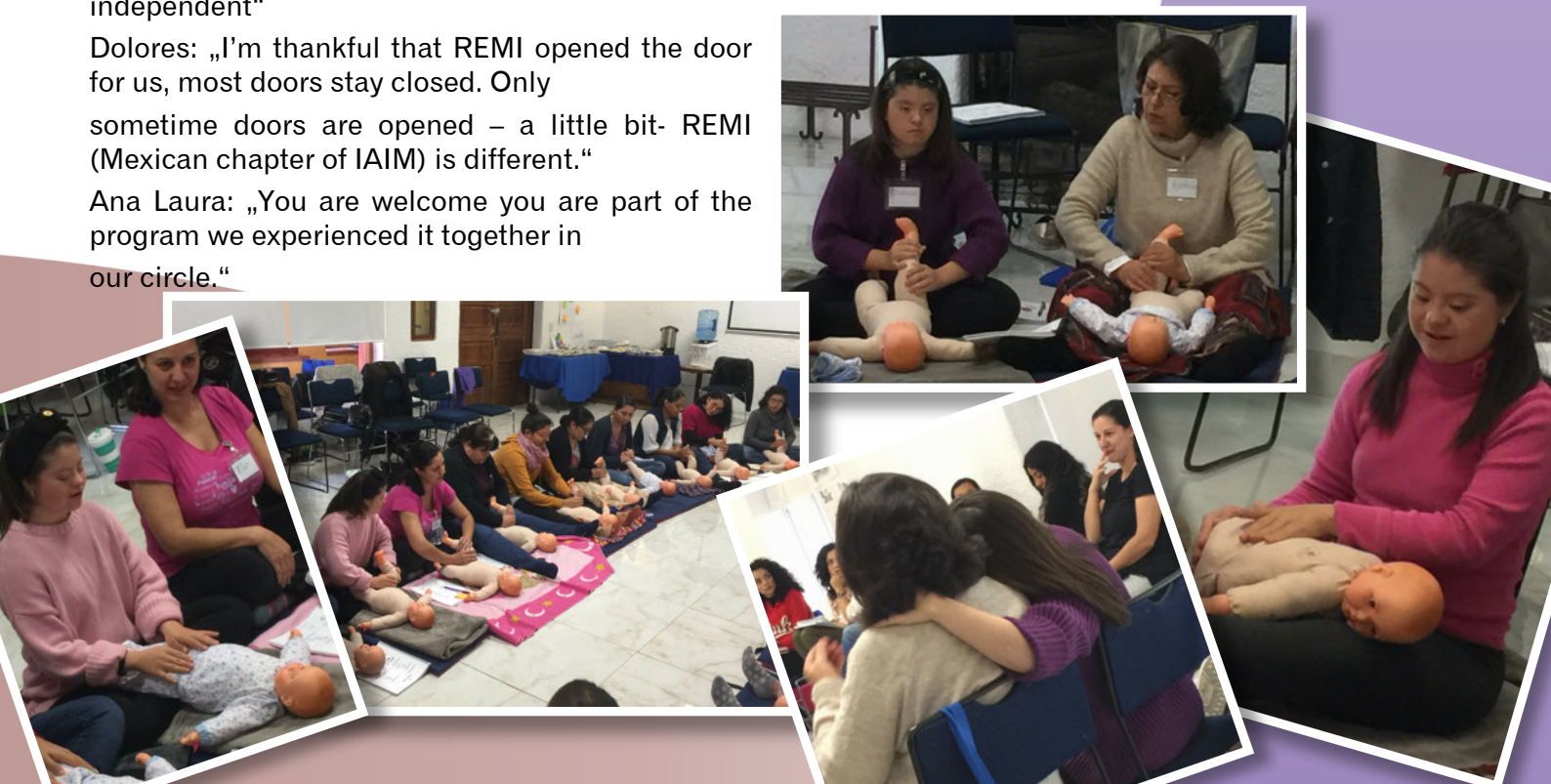
We interviewed Diana and Dolores on video. You are invited to see the interview in English spoken by Laura Papendick

For this interview:

https://youtu.be/MBM_NcnvbmK

To see Dolores' story:

<https://youtu.be/wwPcoY6W4VU>



A Mom's reflections during Covid-19

A South African story



I recently met Pieter-Louis and Stephanie van Twisk when they attended the parent sessions during the practical part of my training. They shared their experience with us

By Ronel Coetzee

How did the real experience of giving birth during lockdown differ from your dream you had when you discovered you were pregnant?

My pregnancy was bad to start with, I didn't have morning sickness, I had ALL day sickness and ended up in the hospital 3 times just to get rehydrated and stop my weight loss. When that finally ended I was looking forward to the good parts! Like my baby shower! Then Covid 19 and lockdown changed all my plans and dreams. I would have had 3 baby showers, one of my friends was planning a 'welcome little duckling' party, my actual baby shower and then my baby shower organised by my colleagues from work. So the general rule is don't buy anything until you've had your baby shower.

When lockdown was first announced I wasn't too worried as it would only be 21 days and Danté was due at the end of May. Then the lockdown period was extended and I started to really get worried. I had a crib for my baby with no mattress and no diapers. That was it! I was not allowed to buy a mattress for my baby's crib or anything I needed because it wasn't regarded as an essential product. It was starting to get colder and none of my clothes fit anymore, but I couldn't buy bigger clothes because it wasn't seen as an essential product! I ended up wearing a blanket or bathrobe over my dresses just to try and keep warm. It was freezing, I was constantly cold. Then the lockdown period was once more extended! This is where I really started to worry, how can clothes and ALL baby goods not be regarded as essential?

My mom had to come live with us for a while and we were lucky that she brought most of the

gifts she and my mother-in-law had already bought with her. This helped and I felt a bit better because at least I now had some of the basic necessities.

The closer my due date got, the more problems we were presented with. There was a possibility that my husband would not be allowed to come with to the hospital when our son - our first child - was born. We were also informed that if he was allowed, he would only be allowed to stay an hour after the delivery and then he could come back 3 days later to pick us up. We had to get tested for Covid 19 before I delivered my baby. Now all the questions stated, what would happen if I tested positive? What if I go into labour early? Will I have enough things for my baby when he arrives as I do not have everything that I needed.

Reality then started dawning on me, everything we missed out on, the baby shower, I missed my 4D scan, going shopping for baby. Constantly worrying that my husband or I would get this virus. It took the 'wow' out of the visits to the gynaecologist because we could get the virus, we could find out new rules for the hospital as the rules got more strict, what happens if someone tested positive in the hospital? What if I test positive, would they take my baby away? Would my baby also have the virus? The excitement of having a baby was now replaced by fear and negative feelings. I didn't want to get up in the mornings and cried a lot! My husband asked what he could do and I told him to just leave me to cry because everything about this pregnancy is going so wrong including the financial stress due to pay cuts and my husbands being temporarily without income.

A Mom's reflections during Covid-19

A South African story continued...

The week before my scheduled C-section, we were tested for Covid 19. Our test results came back negative that same day. Then the day finally arrived, 25 May 2020.

Even though we had to wear masks during the C-section, they still made it special - our anaesthetist kept making jokes when I asked a question a bit nervously and he took my phone to make sure we had more than enough photos. As this was my first baby, I'm not sure how much different this was from a normal situation.

What was your hospital experience like?

The nursing staff allowed the dads to stay for more than an hour and we cherished as much of this bonding time as we could, took way more photos than possible! We knew that our parents wouldn't be able to visit so we downloaded a photo album app to make sure that the grandparents will receive photo's at the same time and be able to feel as much a part of the experience as possible. After an hour my husband was told it's time to leave and I was SO scared. They came to take Danté. Everyone told me I would be happy because this would give me time to rest but honestly, I was extremely sad and lonely. I wanted our parents to meet their grandson and I wanted my husband to be next to me with our son in his arms. I was woken up for feeds and then my son was taken again. When my husband tried to video call me I refused the call because I couldn't stop crying. It was all just too much to take in as a first-time mom when I was expecting the full backup of my husband and our families.



At home, alone with your baby and your husband, how did you feel in terms of support, missing family members, etc?

My brother actually asked me how scared I was when I got into the car and realised that there is no help anymore, its just us and the baby. Truthfully when those hospital exit doors opened and I saw my husband I was ecstatic, we just wanted to get out of there and be a family! My husband joked we were ready to throw our baby in the back and just GO! We were both new parents but we would learn together and that was what we wanted. He had missed out on the start of our baby's life and we had to make up for that.

We are thankful for phones, photo's and zoom meetings to stay in contact, it is however just not the same as actual contact.

How do you think the lockdown has had a positive effect on you and your baby, and your family?

The entertainment industry my husband works in basically shut down the moment public events were prohibited, so where I normally didn't see him much, he is now home most of the time. It's like having our own little nest with just the 3 of us. I absolutely love the bonding time and as I was forced to start working from my home within 2 weeks, I knew our son was safe with my husband. I know we would not have had this much time together if it was not for this special lockdown situation.



Stephanie, Pieter-Louis and baby Danté

A Mom's reflections during Covid-19

A South African story continued...

Do you think your baby missed out on social interaction - did this have an influence, ie does he become overwhelmed easily by new people and experiences?

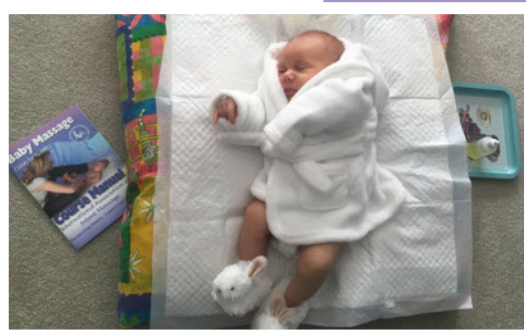
We had a bit of a rough start with Danté as he lost weight due to a tongue tie and jaundice, so he slept most of the time and I do not think he noticed much. I am however very scared that this lockdown will turn my son into an introvert just because he isn't learning to socialize with other children.

How did you feel attending a baby massage course during this time, even with only one other parent present?

I loved it. I loved having quality time with my son and having other people as well as another baby around him. I loved my son's reactions to the other baby's cries and just the overall socialising during this time. I honestly wasn't worried too much about the virus as we were only a few people and all the necessary safety measures were in place. The classes were the highlight of this lockdown, just getting to bond with my son with no distractions of work.

Would you have preferred doing a Zoom course instead, or does attending a personal class have more benefits. If so, why?

No, I would not have received the same vibe and atmosphere at home with a zoom course as I did in class. I've had other classes on zoom and everyone turns off their screens and just listens. The class was perfectly heated, we were greeted, drinks were offered, my husband was even invited to join. There were snacks, the entire place just looked and felt cosy. The interaction with the instructors, other mommy and baby was something I needed way more than I realized at the time. I loved it so much that I now also want to become an instructor to give that gift to other parents.



A CIMI's reflections on teaching online

A German story

Christina Siedersleben – C.I.M.I.® from Germany

right now and do what you would do at home. Always ask your baby's permission."

We made sure the parents' computers were set up in a way, that nothing private could be seen. The mothers were able to see me as instructor, taking care not to lose baby's eye contact for too long and that the mothers could see all the strokes.

For me it was kind of irritating not to hear the parents and babies, because due to smooth running it was necessary that all of them put off their microphones. In case of questions we agreed upon a special sign, so they could activate their microphone to bring up the question.

One mother said, because her son was already moving and becoming more interested in exploring his environment, he also became interested in looking at the screen in between. Yes, technology helps us tremendously in times like these and the experience is interesting, although not optimal. But this was still a beautiful experience for the parents.

I am very happy, that it is now possible again, to bring small groups together in person in my family center. I made small "islands" at appropriate distance. We do not sing anymore, but also with this, the modern technology turned out to be supportive. I recorded the songs on my mobile phone, sent them per "Threema" to the parents and in that way we can listen to the songs and at home, families are ready to sing and give massage to their little ones!



Infant massage online... that sounded strange to me at first, but I tried...

Parents were waiting for a class and babies are growing, even in pandemic times. The longer you wait to start with infant massage, the more difficult it becomes to introduce, such as the age when babies start moving, so I decided to try presenting the course online.

I started looking for information on which online platform is the best for all security recommendations and I decided to work with "Webex". There were many things to consider beforehand: Where do I sit? Where to put the light? Am I seen? Can the parents see the baby doll?

In my family center "Tietzia" in Berlin, Germany, the wireless internet is not working consistently, so I decided to take a room within my home.

Webex is quite easy to understand, the parents participating got an invitation via email and we could start.

On Monday at 10 o'clock the first pictures were on my screen. The first group had 6 mothers, they already knew each other and registered together, which was beautiful. I collected their signatures in advance to confirm that they agree with the conditions of the online class and that there will be no recording during the sessions.

It was important for me to give all the information to the parents like I usually do in the personal classes: "We as adults have scheduled the infant massage class, but sometimes the babies are not ready. Observe your baby to see if they are receptive, or if your baby has any other needs. Feel free to do anything your baby needs

A CIMI who gave birth at home during Covid-19

A New Zealand story

by Fiona Witt

When I discovered I was pregnant I was absolutely delighted; after being a midwife for ten years it was finally my turn to be on the receiving end of midwifery care. I was so excited to experience the wondrous changes my body would undergo over the next ten plus months as it protected and grew my developing baby, gave birth, nourished my newborn through breastfeeding and then went somewhat back to “normal”.

As my pregnancy was relatively low risk my plan was to birth at a primary birthing unit so I could use the birthing pool and enjoy three nights' midwifery support postnatally. As I was approaching my maternity leave Covid19 was becoming more of an issue in New Zealand so I was relieved to finish work as I worked in a hospital. During my first week of maternity leave (37 weeks pregnant) New Zealand went into Lockdown at alert level 4. For me this meant I had to cancel all of the lovely plans I had made for my maternity leave before baby arrived but more significantly it meant severe restrictions at healthcare institutions to visitors and support people for women giving birth. It was possible that my husband would not be able to stay with me during my postpartum stay in the birthing centre. If they didn't have the visiting restrictions at the birth centre my other concern would then be the increased risk of transmission of Covid19 at the birthing centre. Either way I now felt very uneasy about birthing there. My husband and I therefore decided to remain in our isolation bubble as much as possible and plan for a home birth. I was fortunate enough to find a birthing pool that I could hire at short notice and the hire company had very reassuring protocols regarding the Covid19 risk.



Three days after my due date I was so excited to finally be in labour; to experience it for myself and I had the most wonderful day! My labour started at 2am with contractions coming every 15 minutes so I left my husband in bed and set myself up in the living room with my Swiss ball and hot water bottle. I spent the first four hours of my labour on the phone to my mum and sister in the UK who were at home due to the Covid19 lockdown in the UK and awake because of the time difference. My excitement and delight at being in labour grew with each contraction that came – I was loving being in labour and so excited that I would soon meet my baby. At 6am when my contractions were more regular (coming every 3 minutes) I woke my husband and applied my TENS machine. At 9.20am my LMC attended to assess me – I was 3cm dilated so she went home again and advised me to call her when the contractions were stronger. I decided to get in the pool at 10am and it felt fabulous! We called my LMC back just after 1pm and she arrived just before 2pm as I was starting to get more distressed. My contractions became unbearable soon after she arrived and within 20 minutes my daughter was in my arms.

That day was the most incredible day of my life. The attention and care I received from my husband as he supported me through every contraction and then joined me in the pool towards the end of the labour made this one of the most intimate and romantic days of our relationship. I loved how the majority of my labour was just the two of us; I felt confident that baby was coping well with labour as she was moving well throughout so didn't deem it necessary to call my LMC back too soon to monitor fetal wellbeing. My LMC arrived at the exact time I needed her – when I was at the “I can't do this any more” stage. I felt so empowered and exhilarated throughout the whole day.

My daughter breastfed very well from the very beginning and has continued to do so. I think this is thanks to her calm entry into the world and the fact we enjoyed over 8 hours of uninterrupted skin to skin contact immediately after her birth. One of the beauties of having a homebirth was there was no hurry to shower or transfer to another room – we

Fiona's story continued...

enjoyed hours of snuggles on the sofa while being waited on firstly by our midwives and then by my husband.

Looking back on the birth day of my daughter I now can't believe I even considered not having a homebirth. I actually went through a process of grief for a few days afterwards; I was so over the moon and in love with my daughter but was incredibly sad that labour was over. I feel overwhelming saddened that this is not the experience for more women; homebirth aside, too many women go into labour from a place of fear rather than a place of empowerment and excitement. I'm already looking forward to next time!

For the first three weeks of my daughter's life it was just me, her, my husband and the occasional visit from my wonderful midwife. This was such a special time that we will treasure forever; we had lots of skin to skin contact and started introducing her to short massages. She's almost seven weeks old now and loves her massages. We really enjoyed those lazy days of just the three of us snuggled up at home or going for occasional walks in the local park and felt ready to introduce her to family and close friends by the time lockdown was lifted.

At times it did feel quite lonely, especially before I gave birth. My three weeks of maternity leave before baby's birth were spent at home in isolation. This made the last part of my pregnancy pass very slowly and I did experience some anxiety about Covid19. I was also quite nervous the first time I took baby out and about but that can be quite normal for a first time mum with a new baby anyway. I still haven't participated in any group activities for mums and babies but I'm hoping to find some soon.



COVID reflections from Jordan By CIMI Jumana Bader

I am a CIMI from Amman, Jordan. A small country in the Middle East.

At this special circumstance all around the world I wanted to share my experience with teaching, or the lack of it sadly for that matter.

In Jordan we had 3 months of complete lock down due to COVID 19, and after it, things did open very slowly and gradually, but with a lot of carefulness from the population still, everyone is super scared because we're a small country, and if the virus spreads the hospitals won't be able to handle big numbers... so unfortunately parents' interest in the touch of infant massage was minimal or non existent, people had more important priorities on their mind like putting bread on the table because the economic and financial status have deteriorated beyond repair.


Now the news of a new wave and a new partial lock down is occupying our minds yet again!

I pray for better times and a quick recovery of the world, of the global economy, and long for the return of our precious loving touch to the hearts of babies around the world.

Teaching online during Covid-19

Reflections from Singapore

by Ong Hui Tze, Singapore Chapter Representative



COVID-19 has affected everyone world-wide. And in Singapore, the government has been advocating safe distancing, going out unless necessary since March 2020. I started splitting up the physical group classes into smaller groups, and making sure participants took their temperature, washed their hands, and were seated at least 1m apart from other families. In April, the local government announced that we were going to implement the "Circuit Breaker"; non-essential businesses, events and activities had to stop. I had to suspend my infant massage classes too.

Early May we received a message from the Singapore Chapter that we would be able to conduct online infant massage classes during this special pandemic situation. I thought to myself: 'This is probably the first time CIMIs are allowed to teach online classes!' Frankly, I was a little apprehensive on conducting online classes, but on the other hand, intrigued. I submitted my request to our Chapter and was promptly sent the guidelines, terms & conditions & revised handouts for the online classes.

I had some initial concerns about having online classes:

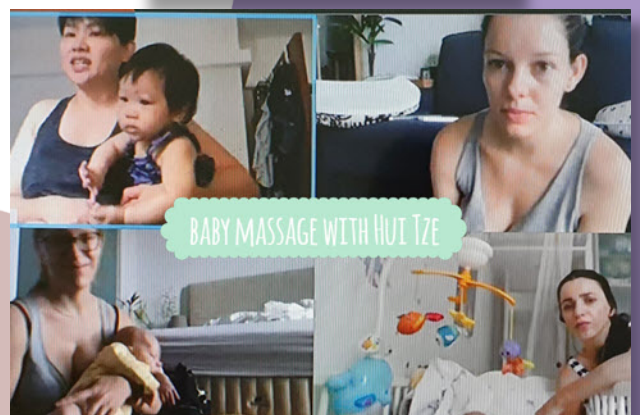
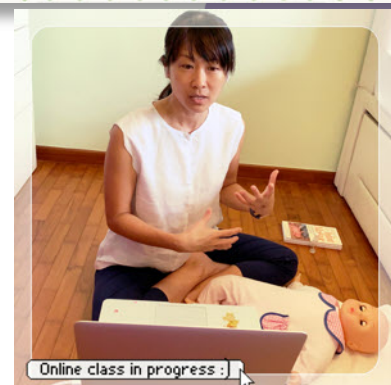
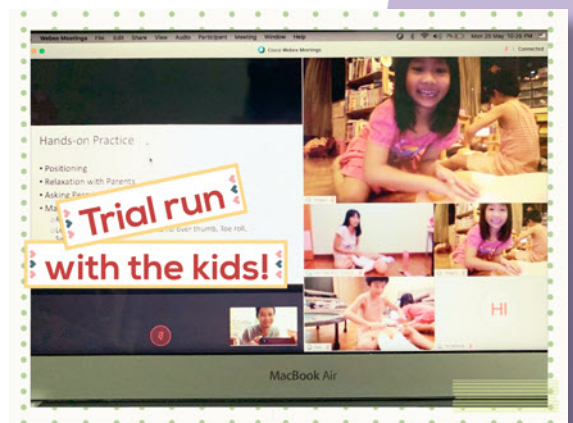
- How am I going to engage the parents effectively?
- How am I going to charge the fees for online course?
- Will parents want to join an online class to learn infant massage?
- The strokes that are covered in online are significantly fewer than the original curriculum, will it affect the quality of the class?

However, I changed my mind when I gave it more thought. Based on the fundamentals of IAIM, parents are the experts, babies are the teachers and CIMIs are the supporters. We are there to teach the parents to understand & respond to baby's cues, rather than focusing on the strokes. And in this vulnerable period of isolation, we should be there for parents and their babies, to remind parents of their maternal and paternal capabilities, and giving them the support that they need!

The response from parents were surprisingly good and my classes were filled up within days after I posted up my upcoming classes in May. I was encouraged to do my best for these online classes! With the comprehensive online class guide that was created by the Circle of

Trainers, I created my Powerpoint slides. The next step was to test out the online platform (I used Cisco Webex). I roped in my supportive husband and my two inquisitive kids to do trial runs. The kids were extremely excited, each taking a device and a doll, and sitting at different parts of the house learning infant massage! This process has definitely allowed my husband and kids to understand more of what I am doing as an infant massage instructor!

The trial runs were useful in helping me know what to convey to the parents, in terms of Webex's functions, and how to position the device for the class so I can see them clearly during the hands-on segment. It boosted my confidence too. The comprehensive online class guide, trial runs and preparations were no doubt the contributing factors for the classes to run smoothly!



Reflections from Singapore continued...

Based on my own experience and also the feedback gathered from parents, these are the advantages of having online classes:

- convenience (not needing to travel out with a baby)
- at the comfort of their own home, they feel more relax
- get to talk to other parents to share parenting tips and challenges (The beauty of group classes, whether it's physical or online classes, is the support the parents get from one another!)
- everyone stays safe in this vulnerable period
- no cost on transport and rental of workshop room (for instructor)

And the challenges of online classes:- occasional lagging due to internet connection that affected communication (but that was actually quite rare in my case, thankfully)

- inability to interact the families up close and personal, but I kept in contact with the parents and checked in on them frequently after the classes ended

Overall, the parents and I enjoyed the online classes tremendously! It was a great learning opportunity for me as an instructor and I'm happy that I'm still be able to support parents in their parenting journey during this challenging time!

Reflections from the USA

Linda Storm

During this time of social distancing, it is challenging for everyone. It is especially hard when we want to connect and support parents and babies.

Fortunately, IAIM decided that CIMIs could teach parents virtually. It isn't "the best", but it does have many benefits.

I was very happy because it allowed me to connect with two of my nieces who have babies. I live in VA and they live in OH. We coordinated our times and found good positions so we could see each other and the babies. I felt honored to share my work with them and to spend time with them as new moms with their babies. Besides learning strokes, they had an opportunity to talk about their thoughts and concerns about being a new mom. They gained a better understanding of their baby's communication. They could see how their baby was responding to touch.

Because we could share the work virtually, I had the opportunity to and spend time with them when and share the many benefits of infant massage when I would not have been able to before. I was able to see and support my nieces come into their new roll as moms, We talk about the normal IAIM topics and they shared about their experiences, they asked questions and we found answers together. This time meant so much to me and them. To see my two great nieces enjoy the intimate touch and interaction with their moms was delightful. My nieces and I have a deeper relationships because of this experience and my nieces feel more empower as moms.

Another wonderful experience that I would like to share was with a teen mom living with her parents. The grandmother asked me if I could teach her daughter infant massage. The grandmother felt that her daughter was feeling

like she couldn't comfort her baby and that the baby liked the grandmother more than her. During our sessions we covered the IAIM material. The mom was very receptive and asked questions. I was able to notice how the mom was responding to her baby and how the baby was interacting with her and comment. I deliberately looked for ways to complement and support the mom.

At the second session she was beaming and so excited. The baby wasn't crying as much. She was feeling more comfortable/confident meeting her baby's needs. The grandma noticed the difference a difference and commented about it.. Life had become less tense.

By the last session the mom was a different person then when we started. She was a confident mom who knew her baby and how to meet his needs.

The grandma contacted me and was Thrilled with the difference in her daughter and grandson. It was a very rewarding experience. Though I couldn't be face-to-face, the virtual sessions worked beautifully.



Some more reflections from New Zealand

Jo Osborne and P-J McCrea

Certified Infant Massage Instructors P-J McCrea, based in a small rural township in the Kaipara District called Te Kopuru, & Jo Osborne (IAIM Trainer), based in Christchurch give their feedback on teaching online over lockdown.

What were your reason/s for teaching infant massage online over lockdown?

P-J: Isolation was my main reason. Fear of these mamas being unable to connect with anyone else whilst they were getting to know their baby. Leading to the possibility of feeling lonely, isolate, anxious, stress, depression, fatigue, sleep disturbance. Infant Massage as we know is a wonderful activity to do with baby helping to reduce cortisol levels and increasing the oxytocin love drug, for both baby and parent. A wonderful bonding experience. I felt I needed to continue my services online.

Jo: I had a physiotherapy colleague ask me to work with a mum and her toddler with a significant visual impairment and disability, to assist with body awareness, as well as for bonding.

What did you enjoy about teaching online during lockdown?

P-J: I enjoyed connecting with the newborn parents. I can't believe how we have moved forward in the world with technology and I was still able to support these mamas during the Covid-19 crisis via my laptop. Not having to travel out to the class room setting. Not having to carry all the equipment. Not having to pay an overhead.

Jo: It was my favourite part of my week for the two weeks I got to teach this mum. It was a shift from doing my physio work and I felt like I was helping this mum and her daughter.

What was your favourite moment/s when teaching during lockdown?

P-J: My favourite part was always the getting to the hands on massage techniques. Also reading a quote at the end. Also a dad had the opportunity to join in on one of the sessions as mama was poorly in bed. He thoroughly loved it and he sang the tommy thumb song. He had never experienced this before and it was his 2nd baby. Also when I was able to watch and see the parents massage their babies and hear their babies talking.

Jo: Watching this mum with her little girl, as she already knew her cues, but watching the bond develop even more through the massage, and the little girl absolutely relaxing into the leg strokes.

What challenges did you experience with teaching online?

P-J: The Internet - as the whole world was on the internet it slowed down considerably. 2 mamas decided to wait and attend the face-to-face class and they felt they were unsure they were massaging baby correctly.

Jo: Finding the right place to put the laptop so the parent could see and hear me, and I could see and hear them. The little girl only liked the leg strokes, and as that was only 2 strokes, I felt that I was letting the mum down by only being able to show her this very limited massage routine. The little girl was very clear that she didn't want her feet massaged, so we used the still-touch hold on her feet which she started to tolerate in the second session. The mum had to go back to work full-time after the second session so we couldn't do anymore sessions or meet up after lockdown was over to teach them the full massage routine. I felt I could have offered so much more with a full leg routine, but under the IAIM Guidelines for the Covid response this didn't seem appropriate.

What feedback did you get from parents about the experience?

P-J: They loved the sessions. The Dad felt blessed to be able to spend time with his daughter and learn some massage. The Mama enjoyed the bonding experience.

Jo: The mum and daughter really enjoyed learning the limited massage and appreciated the small amount they learnt.



Teaching online during Covid-19

Reflections from Russia



Another experience with online courses

By Nadezhda Globa, Nizhny Tagil, Russia

2020 has brought us all a lot of changes. Mothers and babies who are socially isolated even without quarantine have found themselves in particularly difficult conditions.

The work of paediatricians and specialists who help them is limited and it is difficult to get advice on how to take care of the baby and his or her health.

Luckily, during these times of restrictive measures, the IAIM has issued recommendations for online teaching. My 5 years experience as an instructor helped to pay attention to the organization of such online meetings: so that even through the screen it is possible to convey the idea of the importance of caring touch to moms and babies.

I taught 4 online groups of moms with children from newborns to 8 months from my town and suburbs. I received a lot of positive feedback and gratitude for the opportunity to master the knowledge and skills of the massage online.

After the course many moms bought Vimala McClure's book to immerse themselves even more in the world of loving massage with their own hands.

My experience with online courses

By Kama Tvorogova, Saint Petersburg, Russia

The cons:

- No general group atmosphere. It's hard to feel the mood of people on the other side of the screen and to adjust.
- It's not convenient to work just with a laptop, you need an extra camera.
- Unstable Internet connection does not help. Many people are out of town in the summer. (Mobile) Internet depends on the weather.
- Moms can't always get online from their computers. You can see worse on the phone, but they're coping. They learn to move even like this.
- There's no way to give Mom a spare massage doll. They were replaced by toys, stuffed children's clothing, older children or just movements in the air. Everybody learned the practical part - that's the main thing. It's a good thing it's simplified!

The pros:

- Lessons can be given and taken from anywhere as long as there's the Internet. Both the participants and I moved, but that didn't interfere with the class.
- The online format is convenient because it's easy to change the schedule. Someone got sick, for example - I can announce the postponement of classes half an hour before. Moms feel respected when I adjust the schedule to their needs.
- VKontakte's social networking chat supports group unity, so fragile in times of isolation.
- I ask the moms to take a picture of the massages. I encourage them to practice and get photos. Of course, I ask for permission to publish.

On the whole, I liked it.

I was able to see the oxytocin wave, the joy of the child, and the tenderness of the mother - even through the screen. 5 Babies under a year old and 4 older brothers and sisters now get a respectful touch. So I know I did these two courses for a reason.

I am grateful to the Association for developing an online program during the pandemic! I feel like it supports many mothers now.

News from Switzerland

The Swiss Chapter is 20 years old!!

The celebration of the 20th anniversary of our chapter took place in Fribourg, Switzerland on the 30th of November 2019.

We had the joy of welcoming 110 people, who were able to attend two conferences, choose from 9 workshops and network with other associations.

A big thank you again to all the participants, the animators, the sponsors and to all the people who helped us organize this event!

By Wilma Amrein-Good

COVID-19 Reflections from Germany

By Thordis Zwartjes

14 Days after the training, I asked for feedback to ascertain if all students are healthy. After that the documentation was destroyed.

Students comments:

Most students were used to work under special circumstances, the training under COVID-19 was familiar for most participants. 2 Students work for a health department and they shared that they have a big desire to teach parents of special needs children one on one. They said the IAIM program has a lot to offer parents in this special time. Parents are isolated, without any opportunity to communicate and share experiences with other parents.

It was very exciting to plan trainings during this special time. The trainings were announced, long before COVID-19 was known. After the lockdown ended, students who had booked the trainings wanted to get information about the training and guidelines.

I contacted the Bavarian State Ministry and received details about distancing rules, numbers of participants allowed in the rooms, where and how to wear masks and special hygiene requirements. Each city had worked out what needs to be done and what is forbidden.

The venues where the trainings were held, also prepared guidelines to fulfil all needs to be able to offer a safe place for the trainings. Within DGBM e.V. we have CIMI's who are familiar with medical advice concerning COVID-19. Beate Börner shared her knowledge and I decided to do the trainings including all these guidelines. The communication within our chapter worked well, the same with contact persons from the venues.

Before the trainings, students had to sign an agreement that they feel healthy and that they are not diagnosed with COVID-19 and they made sure that they can only participate in the training when they are without any symptoms. Documentation was drawn up about each place, where the students spent the 4 days. A time schedule was prepared to note when students arrive and leave.

Students had to wear masks upon entering the room and once seated they could take it off. When they left their seat they had to wear the mask again.

Some parts of the training had to be changed. Group work and activities were not practised in the usual way.

Parents wanted to participate, which was possible in one training of Patricia Klaus, our German trainer candidate. Patricia's room had several big windows like doors that stayed open during the 4 days and participants could go out there as well. Therefore there was no need to get too close to other people /parents and babies.

In the other trainings the parent class was only possible by means of roleplay. This was different and at the same time a helpful experience. Students of this trainings without parents and babies, will audit a real parent class as soon as possible.



Parents miss to be supported.

Some interesting aspects, during time of lockdown, came from midwives. They said that mothers in early childbirth were less stressed. They suspected that new moms during this time do not have the usual obligations with family and getting back to usual life. Less premature births during lockdown was also noticed.

These trainings gave several opportunities to reflect on the true needs of parents and babies. The importance of support, communication, slowing down and being in touch were key words beside the massage strokes.

COVID-19 Reflections from Thordis continued...

Parent class teaching:

I had the opportunity to teach 3 families during the last weeks in infant massage. I visited the families at their homes. They were interested to get as much information as possible. They felt insecure with their newborn baby (3 and 4 month old). Mothers were alone in hospital during birth, the fathers were not allowed to stay with their wife and baby. Fathers were cautious and felt insecure to touch their baby. They knew a lot in theory but they didn't feel they were the best for their baby and that they know best what their baby needs. That was the most important lesson for all of them. It was an interesting experience for me as instructor to see only one mother and baby at a time and their reaction to the strokes. This way of teaching is most intensive and I'm aware that these parents miss parenting together a lot. They all wanted to get information on where they can get in contact with other parents and they were happy to have attended these personal sessions of infant massage.

In summary, I would like to say that it was a very new and exciting experience, with a lot of unknown aspects. It is a new and some how a different way. We as IAIM trainers and instructors can grow and learn from parents, babies and also learn a lot about ourselves.

COVID-19 Reflections from Portugal

By Maria João Alvito



"I was planning to have an IAIM training in April in Lisbon, Portugal and like all trainers around the world I needed to cancel this training. But instead I started communicating with the students by phone and internet to keep the communication open with them during those months of total social isolation. I invited them for a Zoom meeting to share our experiences, doubts and passion for touch in our personal, family and professional lives. It was a great moment to create a sense of "belonging to a group" with different professional backgrounds but a deep interest in promotion touch in families' lives.

Finally at the end of June when the social context was open, we met face to face and I taught the 4 days IAIM training. It was very special training. We had 2 families & babies for the practical part, and also for them these were special moments. I can not describe in words how special it was, because it was a very deep mix of feelings to the opportunity again to be in personal contact, teaching the importance of nurturing touch in our lives after having lost out on so many moments with family and friends.

We can transform our challenges in a positive way no matter the timing "