



## **Balint Bulletin No 1**

**January, 2005**

Welcome to the first edition of the Balint Bulletin. This will be a newsletter containing news of interest to Australians interested in Balint work.

I am sending this to you because you are involved in Balint work or have expressed interest in the past in being involved in Balint work. Please let me know if you do not wish to remain on the mailing list for this newsletter.

Feel free to contact me with any contributions to this Bulletin. I would especially like to hear about any Balint groups around the country. If you have any news I've left out, please forgive me, and let me know!

## **RACGP Convention 2004**

A very successful Balint workshop was held at the RACGP Convention in Melbourne in 2004. The workshop consisted mainly of small group work in which participants presented and discussed their cases. There were two small groups, each

facilitated by experienced Balint leaders: Amy Ellwood (U.S.A.) and Sam Heard (Darwin) facilitated one group, Marion Lustig (Melbourne) facilitated the other. The groups met for one and a half hours each day for four days. The workshop was intended to give the participants an introduction to Balint work. The evaluations were uniformly positive. Considerable interest was expressed by participants in joining or starting Balint groups and in doing leadership training.

### **RACGP Convention 2005**

Plans are already underway for a similar workshop to be held at the next RACGP Convention in Darwin from September 29-October 2. We are also hoping to hold a session the day before the main conference as an introduction to Balint group leadership. We are likely to have at least two prominent international visitors involved in these workshops.

### **Melbourne Balint activities**

Balint groups are being facilitated in Melbourne by: Marion Lustig, Larry Osborne (co-leading as trainee in one of Marion's groups), Lynette Chazan, Bill Betts, John Coleman and Bill Orchard. These groups are sponsored by Divisions of General Practice or run privately. There is a Balint reading group facilitated by Graeme Smith. There is a Balint Clinical Group providing peer education/support for Balint group leaders.

The Victoria Faculty of the RACGP is sponsoring a major initiative to facilitate peer support for GPs and we are liaising with them to try and have Balint offered as an option for this. We will be visited in March by Henry Jablonsky, who is the current president of the Swedish Balint Society. He will give a talk to the Victorian Association of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapists on March 21 and possibly also meet with a group of Balint enthusiasts. You will be sent further details as they become available.

### **Research**

An interesting research article from Sweden has recently been published: Dorte Kjeldman et al: Balint training makes GPs thrive better in their job. *Patient Education and Counselling* 55 (2004) 230-235. GPs in Balint groups were reported as being in better control of their work situation, thought less often that the patient should not have come for consultation or that psychosomatic patients were a time-consuming burden, and were less inclined to refer patients or take unneeded tests to terminate the consultation with the patient. It was thought that these results might indicate higher work-related satisfaction and better doctor-patient relationships. The results showed that change in the doctors according to the length of their Balint training was significant, thus showing that the results could not be attributed entirely to self-selection into Balint groups by doctors with a greater interest in developing their skills with difficult including psychosomatic patients.

The article is included as an attachment to this Email.

## **Publications**

Two Balint related publications appeared in 2004 from Australia in the U.K. *Journal of the Balint Society*:

Jill Benson. "Compassion fatigue and burnout in Balint groups". *Journal of the Balint Society*. 32:14-16 (2004).

Marion Lustig. "A pilot registrar group in Melbourne". *Journal of the Balint Society*. 32: 17-19 (2004).

Marion Lustig also published an article about her early work with Melbourne Balint groups:

Marion Lustig. "Generating a reflective space for GPs: working with Balint groups". 23: 66-85 (2005).

## **International Balint Federation**

Marion Lustig and Sam Heard are individual members of the IBF

and unofficially represent Australia in the absence of an Australian Balint Society. I am sending them news of Balint developments in Australia for their next Council meeting later in January in Mallorca.

I have attached the minutes of the last IBF Council meeting. Items of interest include:

News from Balint societies in various countries.

Balint workshop including leadership training run by the German Balint Society in Palma, Mallorca January 19-23.

International Balint Federation Congress Stockholm August 24-7.

Guidelines for accreditation of Balint leaders.

IBF criteria for membership.

### **American Balint Society**

The next American Balint Society Leadership Intensive will be held in Santa Rosa, California from March 10-13. These workshops are held twice per year and are highly recommended for anyone wishing to lead or currently leading Balint groups. John Barton from Melbourne will be attending this Intensive. The next one will be in Tennessee from November 10-13. There may be some financial assistance available for attending these intensives for International Balint Federation members. You can join as an individual and hopefully we will have an affiliated Australian society you can join in the near future (see below).

### **Ascona Prize**

I include as an attachment information about this prize which is awarded to annually for an essay by a medical student describing and reflecting on a significant student-patient relationship. I heard the Ascona prize essays read at the International Balint Federation Congress in Berlin in 2003 and

they were very impressive and moving. The prize includes assistance with travel expenses to attend the next Congress this year in Stockholm. If you have any contacts with medical students, please publicize this.

### **Australian Balint Society**

Some of us in Melbourne feel the time is ripe for establishing an Australian Balint Society. We are in the early planning stages. If anyone out there is interested in being involved, please contact me.

**Marion Lustig**

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