

Perinatal Mental Illness in the Courtroom: Training the Expert Witness

Workshop Description

Infanticide or killing an infant is a subject both compelling and repulsive. On one hand is a defenseless infant. On the other, is the image of a mother, insane and likely imprisoned for a crime unthinkable to many. Yet the perpetrator of this act is often a victim too.

Almost 50 years ago, the field of psychiatry shunned mothers with psychiatric illness when it expunged the word "postpartum" from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. Consequently, mothers remained undiagnosed and untreated, perhaps contributing to the fact that the US has the highest rate of infanticide in the western world. Mothers are charged with murder and receive long prison sentences. The biological foundation of postpartum psychosis includes a complex interaction of brain chemicals, heredity and genetic similarities. The UK, Australia, Canada and 21 European countries, aware of these facts, have Infanticide Laws in which mentally ill women who kill a child receive psychiatric hospitalization and treatment.

In the US general psychiatrists or psychologists as "expert witnesses" are unacquainted with the symptoms, subtleties and biological determinants of perinatal illnesses. They provide inadequate defenses for these women. They leave judges and jurors without proper information to determine guilt or innocence.

As experts who have testified for these women we share our expert witness experience in the courtroom. We review the process of forensic evaluation of the defendant mother. We describe collecting information from charts, family, neighbors and police records in order to provide a narrative. We address testimony of the expert in the courtroom and anxieties about this process. At this time there are few perinatal psychiatrists and psychologists who are "expert witnesses" for these women. As perinatal experts we have a duty to share our knowledge and experience with the criminal justice system.

Workshop Start Time

US - Pacific	US - Mountain	US - Central	US - Eastern	BRT (Brasilia)	BST (British Summer Time)	CEST (Central European Summer Time)	SAST (South Africa Standard Time)	IST (India Standard Time)	JST (Japan Standard Time)	AEST (Australian Eastern Standard Time)	AEDT (Australian Eastern Daylight Time)
Mon 12:00 PM	Mon 1:00 PM	Mon 2:00 PM	Mon 3:00 PM	Mon 4:00 PM	Mon 8:00 PM	Mon 9:00 PM	Mon 9:00 PM	Tue 12:30 AM	Tue 4:00 AM	Tue 6:00 AM	Tue 7:00 AM

Registration Fee

\$75

Target Audience

Psychiatrists and psychologists

Presented by

Diana Lynn Barnes, Psy.D, PMH-C

Dr. Barnes is an internationally recognized expert in women's reproductive mental health and is often retained by defense counsel on cases of postpartum psychosis and infanticide, pregnancy

denial and child abuse causing the death of a child. She is a past president of Postpartum Support International and currently sits on the Advisory Council. She is frequently sought by the media on cases where perinatal mental health is at issue and is widely published on all facets of reproductive mental health. She wrote the guidelines for the assessment and treatment of perinatal mood and anxiety disorders for the Perinatal Advisory Council of Los Angeles and is the editor and contributing author of the definitive reference text, *Women's Reproductive Mental Health Across the Lifespan*. She also co-authored *The Journey to Parenthood: Myths, Reality and What Really Matters*. In 2009, Dr. Barnes received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Eli Lilly Foundation for her outstanding contributions to the field of childbearing-related illness. She is a member of the International Marce Society, the Marce of North America and Postpartum Support International. Dr. Barnes maintains a private practice in Sherman Oaks, California specializing in women's mental health.

Margaret Spinelli, MD

Margaret Spinelli MD is a Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons and Distinguished Lifetime Fellow in American Psychiatric Association. She is the co-founder and former Director of the Women's Mental Health Program, York Presbyterian Hospital at Columbia University.

She received her medical and psychiatric training from Cornell University Med. College and Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons. She received further clinical training in perinatal psychiatry at the Mother Baby Unit at the Maudsley Psychiatric Institute and Bethlem Hospital in London.

Since 1994 Dr. Spinelli has evaluated and testified for mentally ill women who have killed their infants and was consultant on the Andrea Yates case. Her book *Psychosocial and Legal Perspectives on Mothers who kill* is the sole psychiatric text on infanticide for which she received the Manfred S. Guttmacher Award from the APA and the Am Academy of Psych and the Law for outstanding literary contribution to psychiatry and the forensic sciences. She was awarded the 2014 Alexandra Symonds Award by the Association of Women Psychiatrists and the APA for her achievements in women's mental health in the fields of clinical services, research, and education.

Her NIMH funded clinical trials focused on her adaptation of Interpersonal Psychotherapy for depressed pregnant women which she has manualized: *Manual of Interpersonal Psychotherapy for Perinatal Depression*.

Dr. Spinelli is currently writing a diagnostic protocol and criteria for Postpartum Psychosis in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.