



“The tide is turning – early years on the agenda”

Mater Child and Youth Mental Health Services Conference

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Opening Presentation

by

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Tidal wave effect



Mt Fuji Scene off Kanagawa by: Hokusai Katsushika (1760-1849)



Status of Children and Young People



Overweight and obesity

20% of 5-8 year olds are overweight

Long term health conditions

11.8% of 0-6 year olds and 14% of 0-17 year olds have asthma

Mental illness

15% of boys and 14.4% of girls aged 4-12 years have mental health morbidities





Child abuse and neglect

- 10,036 substantiated cases in 2001-2002
- 11% of children with substantiated cases of abuse/neglect are indigenous children
- 3,257 children in out-of-home care in 2002
- rate of children in out of home care /1,000 children = 12.2% for indigenous children, compared with 2.9% non indigenous children



Supporting children and families



- 1800s – institutionalisation
- 1900s – emergence of legislation to protect children
- 1950s – battered child syndrome identified
- 1980s - church and non-government sector focussed on child and family support
- 1990s – increased investment in family support sector



Pathways linking ECD to HD



Benefits of ECD	Education	Health	Social Capital	Equality
For children (immediate)	Higher intelligence, improved practical reasoning, eye and hand coordination, hearing and speech; reading readiness; improved school performance; less grade repetition and dropout; increased schooling	Less morbidity, mortality, malnutrition, stunting, child abuse; better hygiene and health care	Higher self-concept; more socially adjusted; less aggressive; more cooperative; better behavior in groups; increased acceptance of instructions	Reduced disadvantages of poverty; improved nutritional status, cognitive and social development, and health
For adults (long-term)	Higher productivity; increased success (better jobs, higher incomes); improved childcare and family health; greater economic well-being	Improved height and weight; enhanced cognitive development; less infections and chronic diseases	Higher self-esteem; improved social competence, motivation, acceptance of norms and values; less delinquency and criminal behavior	Equality of opportunity, education, health, and income
For society	Greater social cohesion; less poverty and crime; lower fertility rates; increased adoption of new technologies. Improved democratic processes; higher economic growth	Higher productivity; less absenteeism; higher incomes	Improved utilization of social capital; enhanced social values	Reduced poverty and crime; better societal health; increased social justice; higher sustainable economic growth

Van der Gaag, J. & Tan, J. P. 1998, *The benefits of early child development programs: An economic analysis*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank, Human Development Network cited in, Young, M. E. (ed.), 2002, *From Early Child Development to Human Development: Investing in Children's Future*, World Bank: Washington.



Commission for Children
and Young People
Queensland Government

MRI scan of the neural connections of a newborn to a two year old child

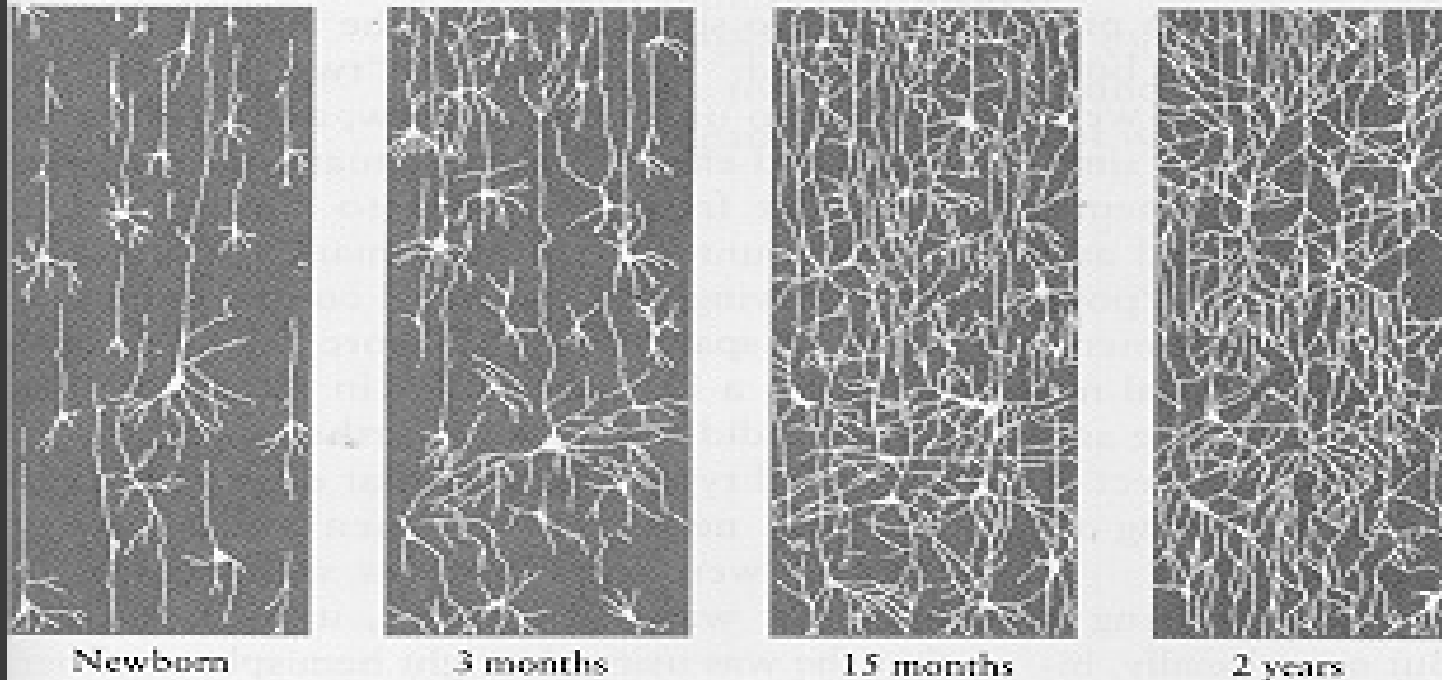


Figure 7.9

The development of neurons in the cerebral cortex from birth to 2 years of age. The neurons grow both in size and in number of connections between them (Conel, 1939, 1959).





A focus on the early years promotes

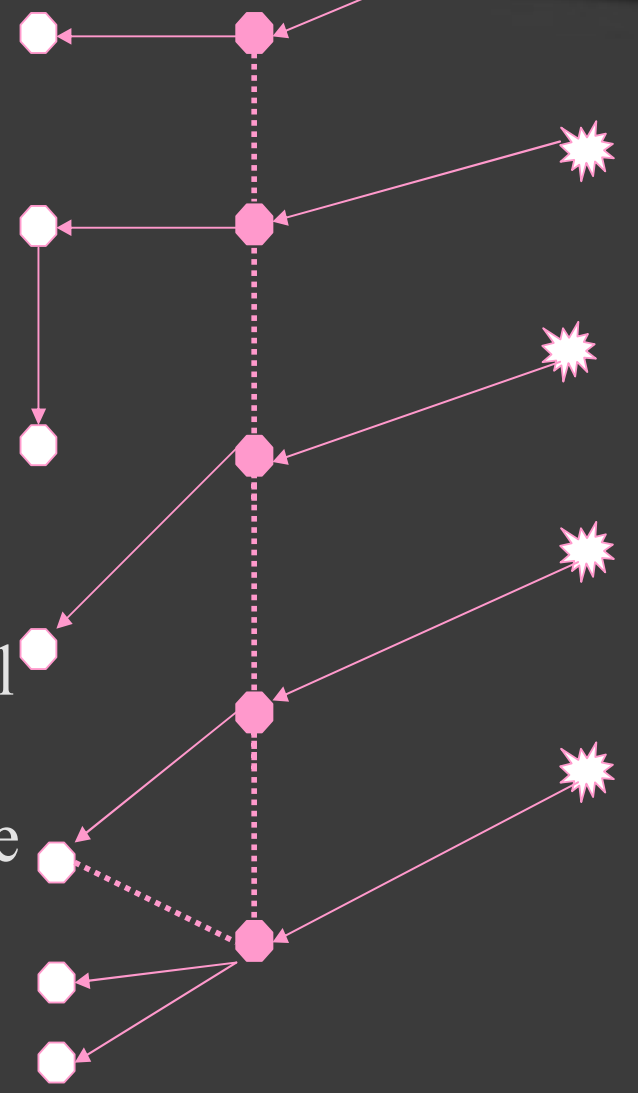
- infant mental health = the basis of life-long emotional and social competence
- resiliency = protective of developmental outcomes



Pathways to Prevention



Vulnerable Family
Early Education
Primary School
High School & Adolescence
Adult Life



- Positive Experience
- Risk of Negative Experience
- Intervention
- At Risk Pathway
- Diversion or Progression to Positive Pathway

Source: The Developmental Crime Prevention Consortium, (1998).



Government initiatives promote

- early intervention and prevention
- evidence-based practice
- a multi-disciplinary approach
- integrated and coordinated services
- a family strengths approach
- building community capacity



The tide is turning...



“...Professionals working on the big picture should also not forget that there is much that they can do personally and locally to effect change”.

Sainsbury, P. (2003). The pursuit of happiness: The politics of mental health promotion. *Australian e-Journal for the Advancement of Mental Health*, 2(1), p.5.

