

# New Skill Building E-Discussions at *ANZJFT*

Ben Hansen and Julie Burgess-Manning

Over the past few years *ANZJFT* has organised a number of on-line discussions about papers that have been published in the journal. These discussions have attracted a number of subscribers, but participation rates have been low. We have sought and obtained feedback from subscribers on this matter. Three issues are apparent:

- People would prefer to discuss the practicalities of family therapy rather than papers at this time
- A number of people reported that they did not feel comfortable airing their views before a wide audience
- A number of people felt that the technology involved was intimidating.

Starting in 2006 *ANZJFT* will offer e-discussions on topics relevant to the everyday practice of family therapy. The discussions will occur in **March**, **June** and **September** and will be widely advertised. The March discussion will be about *family therapy for adolescent anorexia nervosa*. In June we will look at *engaging families in treatment* and in September we will look at *family therapy for behaviour problems in children*.

For each discussion we will endeavour to conscript a relevantly accomplished family therapist to guide us through any thorny issues that may arise. The discussions will not constitute supervision and for legal and ethical reasons the discussions will not be a forum for advice about specific cases.

Three 'moderators' (see below) will run the discussions and facilitate a positive and constructive exchange among participants.

## Veterans and Newcomers Alike are Welcome to Participate

You do not have to be a subscriber to *ANZJFT* to participate. To join the discussions go to [www.anzjft.com](http://www.anzjft.com), put your email address in the form box (lower half of the front page) for discussions and submit it. You will then be emailed contributions as they occur. You can reply to these contributions. Don't forget to sign your name. Technically-minded participants can visit the 'wiki' where the discussions are archived at <http://www.anzjft.info/wiki/>. Webmaster David Mackay will provide a trouble-shooting service during the discussions ([webmaster@anzjft.com](mailto:webmaster@anzjft.com)).

Your moderators will be Paul Rhodes, Julie Burgess-Manning and Ben Hansen.

Paul is a senior clinical psychologist and the team leader of the Eating Disorders (Family Based Treatment) Team at Westmead Hospital. He is a clinical associate lecturer at the University of Sydney and a board member of *ANZJFT*. Paul also conducts workshops on the Maudsley model of family therapy for the treatment of anorexia nervosa.

Julie hails from the Land of the Long White Cloud and is a lecturer at the Wellington School of Medicine. She also has a private psychotherapy practice. Julie trained at the London Institute of Psychiatry and has an honours degree in psychology as well as a masters in family therapy.

I am a psychologist and the team leader of the Child & Youth Mental Health Service at Mackay, North Queensland. I do some tutoring work with James Cook University and I dabble in private practice.

The new e-discussions offer a great opportunity for family therapists of all skill levels to learn new ideas and to network with their peers. Please enjoy.

**Ben Hansen**  
Moderator

## Announcement: First Discussion

Our first discussion will run from Monday 13/03/06 through to Monday 27/03/06. Paul will be stepping out of his role of moderator and taking us through 'What Works with Adolescent Anorexia Nervosa? And How Do You Do It?'

Anorexia nervosa is a serious illness with the highest mortality rate of any psychiatric complaint, with research finding that between 6 and 15% of those diagnosed lose their lives due to protein calorie malnutrition or suicide (Lock & leGrange, 2005). The aim of this discussion is to facilitate a conversation between Australian and New



**Ben Hansen**, Psychologist and Team Leader of the Child & Youth Mental Health Service at Mackay, North Queensland

**Julie Burgess-Manning**, Lecturer, Wellington School of Medicine, New Zealand

Zealand family therapists about the application of family therapy to anorexia in adolescents, including the evidence for what works, with an emphasis on the specific practice of therapy. Paul Rhodes will be available to participate in the discussion along with Andrew Wallis, Tahn Le and Andrea Worth from the Eating Disorders Family-Based Treatment Team at the Children's Hospital at Westmead. This team has taken a leading role in the application of the Maudsley model of family-based treatment for anorexia in Australia, a model that integrates a variety of models of family therapy, and have found that it leads to a significant decrease in readmissions to hospital and chronicity of illness (Rhodes & Madden, 2005). Paul and the team will be available through the discussion to answer questions about this treatment and while they will not conduct specific case consultations, they will place a heavy emphasis on the following:

- What is the evidence for the efficacy of the model?
- Which generic family therapy approaches does it draw on?
- How do you do it?
- How does conducting it differ from published accounts of the approach?
- What wider systems issues need to be considered when implementing it in a medical setting? In a community setting? In private practice?

### The Ethics of Paradox: E-discussion Report

I have a Mac and a PC. What should I do? Does this mean I can speak to both parts of the world? Am I a multiverse of truth?

The recent discussion held online regarding 'The Ethics of Paradox' was an interesting foray into the fields of neuroscience and philosophy. This paper was written by Joel Cullin and published in the September 2005 edition of the *ANZJFT*.

As I did not participate in the discussion, I have the dubious job of trying to summarise it. The full discussion can still be read online, so if your interest is piqued — or alternatively you don't know what I'm talking about it, go to [www.anzjft.info](http://www.anzjft.info) and find out.

In his article, Joel posed the question of whether paradox was actually unethical — and questioned the way that postmodernism has been interpreted by family therapy. Nearly all of the contributors to the discussion agreed with Joel, that paradox can be *used* ethically or unethically. A variety of threads then wove their way through the ensuing discussion, talk of pragmatic use of paradox, hard cases that had responded well to paradox, difficult dating situations that had not. Rick Whiteside contributed his considerable knowledge of strategic therapy to clarify many of the questions that were raised about paradoxical interventions.

Philosophy and Noam Chomsky entered the dialogue — we went down the many-spangled road of discussing whether theory is in fact needed, and whether postmodernism has one. Conversely, directive intervention was recovered from the first order scapheap and resurrected along with paradox. Indeed participants also questioned the idea that we are not 'experts' — why would a family pay good money to see someone who knew less than they about their problems?

Neuroscience entered the fray also, when Bob MacDonald and others excitedly discussed the new developments in brain imaging showing the development of the right hemisphere of children in concert with their mothers/families. Ideas for how this could be incorporated in therapy were also proposed.

Reading this discussion, it is clear that the participants have moved onto a critique of the postmodern, and indeed of social constructionism. I wonder what the next bit (read 'this bit') will be called by our descendants?

**Julie Burgess-Manning**

Lecturer, Wellington School of Medicine, New Zealand

### Maurizio Andolfi in Australia

Maurizio Andolfi (child psychiatrist and Professor in the Department of Psychology, the University of Rome La Sapienza, and Director of the training institute Accademia di Psicoterapia della Famiglia) plans to spend a sabbatical in Australia from August/September 2007 to August/September 2008. He'd like to spend the first semester (September 2007/January 2008) on the west coast and the second (February/August 2008) on the east coast. He would like to be invited to teach on topics related to family development, family counselling and psychotherapy, with particular

attention to adolescent and child development. His research topics, sponsored by the University of Rome La Sapienza, include: 'The quality of life of immigrant families', 'Foreign domestics and their perception of Italian family values and prejudices', 'Foreign adolescents' expectations of work in the future' and the 'The life cycle of families of mixed cultures'.

**If your institution has an opening for Maurizio, please e-mail Aldo Gurgone, his Australian contact: [rgc@iexpress.net.au](mailto:rgc@iexpress.net.au)**