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DIAGNOSIS, CLASSIFICATION AND TREATMENT OF PSYCHOPATHOLOGY IN INFANTS AND TODDLERS: INCORPORATING AN INFANT MENTAL HEALTH APPROACH

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Aims: This workshop will present a theoretical framework to conceptualize early childhood behavior problems in the context of the early parent-child relationship, and will demonstrate how this relational framework can be used to diagnose, classify, and treat child behavior concerns in children under the age of five.

Background: There is increasing evidence to suggest that a significant number of very young children manifest signs of early psychopathology, and that behavioral problems that emerge early are likely to persist, and warrant further assessment and intervention. One of the challenges to identifying early psychopathology in young children is how to diagnose and classify early behavioral disturbances using a developmental and relational framework.

Methods: This presentation will describe an “infant mental health approach” to diagnose and intervene with young children with behavioral concerns. This comprehensive model of behavioral assessment incorporates an assessment of the parent's perceptions of the child, observations of dyadic interactions, and utilizes a developmental context to diagnose, classify and treat early behavioral concerns in children under the age of five. Using the DC 0-3R, this model will highlight how an understanding of child behavior in the context of the parent-child relationship can be a helpful framework to diagnose and treat early behavioral disturbances in children under the age of 5. Participants will learn how to identify vulnerabilities in the parent-child relationship, how to diagnose and conceptualize early psychopathology in young children, and how to formulate interventions to support dyads at risk.