

EMDR HAP IN INDIA

By Rosalie Thomas and Ann Kafoury



Group EMDR with children at an orphanage in Chennai, India after the tsunami

In 1995 Dr. Sushma Mehrotra of Mumbai first read about a new therapy called EMDR. After studying all of the information available to her, she introduced it to the Bombay Psychological Association and then to the Bombay Psychiatric Society. To make sure she understood it correctly, Dr. Mehrotra established contact with EMDR training facilitator and HAP volunteer, Ann Kafoury. She later invited Ann to come to India to give a presentation on EMDR to mental health professionals. Since that time they have worked together to develop trainings and to bring EMDR to the people of India. Ann has served as the coordinator of EMDR HAP programs in India since that time.

EMDR HAP held the first EMDR training in Mumbai, India in 1999, and the second, co-sponsored by EMDR HAP, Manoshakti, a humanitarian outreach program of S.N.D.T Women's University and UNICEF, followed in April, 2001. By that summer, Manoshakti was involved in their first EMDR project. Organized by Dr. Mehrotra and sponsored by J.S. Group of Industries, those recently trained EMDR therapists went into Bhuj where a massive earthquake had shattered the lives of many in the area. By working with the schools and in teams, they were able to treat 16,000 survivors over the next several months.

The other important outcome of those early trainings was that a handful of dedicated EMDR practitioners continued to study and work together to develop their knowledge of EMDR and their skills. They have formed the core of EMDR in India and include Dr. Mehrotra, Dr. Rani Raoti, Dr. Lakshmipria Kannan, and Dr. Parul Tank.

Following the tsunami that devastated Southeast Asia in December, 2004, EMDR HAP organized trainings in southern India where, in the state of Tamil Nadu alone, 12,000 people died, another 5,000 suffered physical injuries, and 650,000 were displaced. Rosalie Thomas joined Ann as co-coordinator of the program. With sponsorship from First Hand Foundation of the Cerner Corporation, EMDR HAP was able to provide training to 86 mental health practitioners—both those in academics and those working in tsunami affected areas—in the use of EMDR. Judith Boel served as trainer for four training workshops – both Part 1 and 2 trainings – from June 2005 through October 2006. Fifty-four completed Part 2, and 43 attended an Advanced Training Day.

First Hand Foundation/Cerner staff in India reported that over 3,000 children were treated individually and in groups with EMDR. Data collection and documentation of services has remained a difficult undertaking, partly due to logistics in the service delivery area, lack of availability of email communication, and general record-keeping practices in the area. While in India, members of the HAP faculty also provided direct services to children at Shanti Bhavan, a school near Bangalore, and to children living at Marialaya and at Shabnam Resources in Chennai.

In cooperation with Dr. Mehrotra and those professionals who were involved in the earlier trainings in Mumbai, EMDR HAP established several longer-term goals for their work in India. First was to support local talented and dedicated practitioners in the development of their skills and professional training. The second goal was to establish a consortium of professionals to determine training, research and practice standards for EMDR in India. Third was to assist in development of a professional EMDR organization to support professionals in their delivery of trauma recovery services to those in need. Finally, Manoshakti's goal is to establish a Trauma Resource Center for EMDR clinicians involved with humanitarian assistance work.

At this point, Dr. Mehrotra, Dr. Raoti, Dr. Kannan, and Dr. Parul Tank have completed training as EMDR HAP Facilitators and have assumed roles as part of the training faculty. Four additional Indian colleagues are in the process of that training. Together, they form a strong base for continued EMDR training in India and will provide consultation and support for those professionals who have completed the basic EMDR training.

For the continued growth of EMDR in India, it is essential that future trainings can be delivered by Indian trainers. Dr. Mehrotra and a colleague will be trained as trainers during 2008. This is being supported collaboratively by Helga Mathis of EMDR Europe and EMDR HAP (US).

With the full support of EMDR International Association, EMDR Europe, and EMDR HAP, Indian colleagues have formed the EMDR Association of India (EMDRAI). Dr. Mehrotra is currently serving as their first President. As such, she attended the EMDR Conference in Dallas, has initiated communication with other EMDR association leaders in Asia, and will be a keynote speaker at the EMDR Europe Conference in London. As EMDRAI develops, they will assume responsibility for setting standards for EMDR training and practice in India and will provide professional support to EMDR professionals in their country.

While the professionals who are involved donate their time and expertise, there is still significant expense to fund their travel and lodging, to arrange space for the trainings, and often to provide lodging for the participants as well. HAP welcomes information about potential funding sources for their work; individual donations can be made online at the HAP website, www.emdrhap.org and earmarked for HAP in South Asia.

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