



# infant

for neonatal and paediatric  
healthcare professionals

## Plus ça change....

Whether we are aware of it or not, changes occur in our lives everyday – some changes are pretty insignificant while others appear to be overwhelming. Alvin Toffler was the first in his book 'Future Shock'<sup>1</sup> to recognise the accelerated pace of change, some change theorists suggest that this is now occurring at an exponential rate. We have only to look at our own history both in the private sphere and in our professional lives to recognise this thrust towards change and alteration. How we deal this depends on many factors, but what is clearly evident is that we cannot afford to stand still. Perhaps a bit of a cliché but it is not only just about standing still and trying to remain in the comfort zone, but it is also about the need to think creatively about the issues that the surround the introduction of change.

Change theory is really a corporate theory and whether we like it or not affects us all. For the first time in history, as individuals we are now required to adapt to a series of changing orders, rather than adapting to an existing order. We are all now living longer and the length of an individual's life span is greater than the length of time necessary for major and cultural changes to take place. Moreover, the rapidity with which these changes are occurring is at an increasingly accelerated pace.

In our own professional field the changes regarding the care of infants and young children have been revolutionary. And only a few weeks ago the papers and television news features carried pictures of the survival of a 22 week neonate, which will, I am sure, open up to further discussion, debate and change regarding fetal viability.

A second quite different example at another level, is that recently I heard from a children's nurse (aged about 40 years) working in a semi-intensive care situation, who was very angry and upset because her manager (not a health professional) told her not to spend time talking to parents on the telephone as the ward clerk could perfectly well do this! The point the manager was missing is that the inherent nature of our work is not just about the child or the infant but the recognition of the child as a

member of a family, as a combined unit. This holistic concept was introduced into child care about 40 years ago, based on evidence from Bowlby, Robertson and others<sup>2,3</sup>. Yet, this managerial change was being ordered in an attempt to keep the budget under control.

Only an ostrich with its head in the sand would want to deny that today we all live in the climate of change. But there is a tendency to be overwhelmed and to accept change for 'an easy life'. Some changes are of course to be welcomed and may make life easier, but I also think that sometimes as a professional group we need to be a bit more outspoken about some of these changes. But whatever our view it needs to be backed with evidence and if necessary offer other possible and practical choices for consideration. It is often helpful to use a simple SWOT analysis in order to identify possible Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Alternatively, make an assessment and a list of the pro's and con's for the change in question. We all need to recognise the potential advantages that the introduction of a change or idea can bring into any organisation.

Dr Emmerson writing in the editorial of the January 2007 issue of this journal<sup>4</sup>, raised the issue of NICU staffing, an issue that has bedevilled the service for some decades. His suggestion is to have a team of fully trained neonatologists providing quality care 24/7. This is a radical but rather appealing suggestion to cope with continuing medical shortages in neonatology, but what it does not address is that unit staffing also involves many other key workers. How will they be affected by this change?

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### References

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2. **Bowlby, J.** Attachment and Loss. Volume 3: Loss, Sadness and Depression. Penguin. 1981.
3. **Robertson, J. Robertson, J.** Separation and the very young. Free Association Books, 1989.
4. **Emmerson, A.J.B.** Do we need a radical change in NICU staffing? *Infant* 2007; 3(1): 4.