

Notes from The President

Dear ISSBD Members, Colleagues and Friends,

As I write, we continue to live with the global pandemic that emerged at the beginning of the year. These are indeed challenging times. I hope you are all doing as well and coping as well as can be expected with the difficult times in which we are living.

While it seems incredible, in many countries we face, again, rising cases of the COVID-19 virus. We have all had personal experiences related to the pandemic, which have varied from minimally to maximally stressful. We have lived with mandates to shelter in place, lockdowns of various sorts, working from home and increasing needs to connect virtually. In addition, we have witnessed the ways in which the pandemic has affected those around us personally and professionally, as well as its effects nationally and internationally.

As a developmental scientist, I have been impressed by the growing awareness of the lay public of how important social connections are, the potential negative effects of social isolation, as well as the link between social and/or psychological health and physical health. Many of us are involved in helping to assess the influence of the pandemic on individuals contemporaneously. As developmental scientists we are also acutely aware of the potential long-term effects of the pandemic – and how this will differentially influence children, adolescents, young, middle-aged and older adults. Indeed, I am quite certain that none among us will disagree that this point in time marks a historical event that will indelibly influence the behavioral development of every person currently alive. Even as I write those words, I know they sound dramatic. Nevertheless, I believe them to be true.

During these unprecedented times, there is much work to do be done. Fortunately, as concerned citizens of both our own countries and the world, and as experts in human behavior, we have a great deal to offer. I believe we will be called upon to identify, assess and potentially intervene to offset the most negative effects of the pandemic. Never before has developmental science seemed so relevant.

I urge you to be cautious and careful both with your own health and those around you. I also urge you to contribute in any way that seems appropriate to helping yourself and others cope with these unprecedented times. And as they say on the airplane . . . put your own mask on before helping others . . . translated to ISSBD and the current times, please make sure you first take care of yourself, and then reach out to help others as best you can. Make adjustments to your life. Don't expect more of yourself than is humanly possible. Celebrate your successes. Reach out to others for help and to help. Innovate. We will have to be creative in order to get through this. And there will be years ahead when our help will be needed to help ourselves and others recover.

Let me also report a few adaptations ISSBD has made. Since we had to postpone our 2020 biennial meeting in Rhodes until 2022, I invited each of our planned keynote speakers to deliver virtual pandemic keynotes. As a result, we were able to broadcast 6 pandemic keynotes live:

Title: Multisystem Resilience for Children and Youth in Disaster: Reflections in the Time of COVID-19

Speaker: Ann Masten, University of Minnesota, USA.

Title: Adolescents' contributions to the needs of self and others: Longitudinal brain and behavioural development and effects of Covid-19

Speaker: Eveline Crone, Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands.

Title: *Developmental Robotics for Language Learning, Trust and Theory of Mind

Speaker: Angelo Cangelosi, University of Manchester and Alan Turing Institute, UK.

Title: Challenges and Opportunities in the Aged Society

Speaker: Hiroko Akiyama, University of Tokyo, Japan.

Title: Young Children's Imagination: Reality-Based or Fantastical? Paul Harris, Harvard University, USA.

Title: Context and Research Capacity Enhancement in the Majority World

Speaker: Kofi Marfo, Aga Khan University, South-Central Asia & East Africa, and University of South Florida, USA.

Fortunately, this was a highly successful endeavor.

First, I am eternally grateful to these internationally distinguished scholars for donating their time and expertise to this effort. Second, I am pleased to report that an advantage of virtual keynotes is that people who would not have been able to attend the biennial meeting in Rhodes were able to hear the insightful remarks of our invited speakers. Additionally, the keynotes were recorded, with permission, and are available to an even wider audience through the ISSBD website.

Further, we have and continue to explore new ways to offer emerging scholars, most notably our Developing Countries Fellows and our Jacobs Fellows, mentorship and guidance virtually. Because we were unable to have the planned workshops in Rhodes, a number of virtual meetings have been held to provide advice and guidance on ongoing and/or planned projects.

If you have found any successful adaptation that you think might be useful for ISSBD to adopt, please be sure to let me or any other member of the Executive Committee know.

I hope you and your loved ones are safe and healthy. After these many long months, each of us has been touched by this pandemic. I stand with you and urge you to join together. By supporting one another I have no doubt that we will find the strength to withstand this pandemic and emerge from it prepared to advance the science of human development to the benefit of all.

Warm regards,

Toni C. Antonucci