

## Social environment during early development

Further to my earlier article on preconception health<sup>[1]</sup>, there is another critical aspect of risk factor which affects the mother and the foetus. A friend of mine sent me a video of conversation between Russell Brand and Gabor Mate, which is worth watching. Damaged leaders rule the world<sup>[2]</sup>. It is a long video (link below) but points at any undue pain inflicted during pregnancy and childhood can affect the child to adulthood, including addiction.

It has been well established that smoking, alcohol and drugs adversely affect the growing foetus.<sup>[3]</sup> Psychological aspects affecting the growing foetus and childhood are equally, if not greatly, impact on the growing young mind.

Social environment during early development has a strong effect on social behaviour throughout life in humans and other animals.<sup>[4]</sup> Human race is sensitive social being, and lack of empathy, compassion, grace, recognition leads to one's efforts to ease pain and lack of inner happiness through one or the other kind of addiction. Reference is made to "wounded in the womb" and "robbing childhood". Traumatized people inflict the same pain to their loved ones, often unaware of their actions, unless they have addressed and overcome their own inner pain, in an adult and allowing a vicious cycle to continue. Addiction of drugs, including alcohol; power; sex; recognition; gambling to mention a few. It reflects the ills of society which are being nurtured by various types of addiction by people. Past and present world leaders are no exception. Addiction is defined as a psychological and physical inability to stop consuming a chemical, drug, activity, or substance, even though it is causing psychological and physical harm. It is also defined as a persistent compulsive use of a substance known by the user to be harmful, one can safely add to this definition "compulsive desire for power attitude or way of life"

Responsibilities start primarily with the parents. First and foremost is the consideration and understanding that to have a child is a great responsibility, where child comes first and many parental sacrifices are required for a considerably long periods of time. Parents many have to sacrifice many of their pleasures and to find enough time to spend with child/children. Responsibilities include giving up smoking and excessive use of alcohol; disproportionate reliance on others to take care of children such as late-night outings; expensive hobbies that may deprive their children from having essentials including proper nutrition, education, and playtime; controlling their emotions (arguments, fights and violence) that may adversely affect the children causing them pain are some of the sacrifices parent need to make to ensure good health and mental state of children.

The governments have a responsibility in creating an environment where protecting parents and children is possible. Recognising and valuing the position of women in society, upholding against domestic and other violence against women, ensuring the rights of children including universal education and outlawing child labour and supporting reproductive rights of people. Governments have a responsibility to address social inequalities to eliminate poverty, which have been shown to be an important cause of deprivation and poverty. The UK government's

green paper on preventing ill health in the next decade has been widely criticised as a “missed opportunity” for failing to tackle widening health inequalities, stalling life expectancy, increasing obesity levels, and damage from alcohol.[5] In Michael Marmot's words, "Put simply, social injustice is disempowering. It deprives people of control over their lives".[6] (*Please read this article, link below. It is an eye opener!*) or what Sen says, "It is not what you have that is important for health, but what you can do with what you have".[7]

#### References:

[1] This website. Preconception Health. July 14, 2019. (Home > Old Items)

[2] <https://youtu.be/C-mJnYmdVmQ> Click on this link to see the video

[3] Substance Use During

Pregnancy. <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternalinfanthealth/substance-abuse/substance-abuse-during-pregnancy.htm#>

[4] Bruce A. Carlson. Early life experiences have complex and long-lasting effects on behavior. PNAS October 31, 2017 114 (44)

[5] Elisabeth Mahase. Prevention green paper lacks ambition, say critics. BMJ 2019; 366: l4829

[6] [Michael Marmot. Viewpoint. The health gap. The Lancet. Vol 386. December 12, 2015 p2442-2444.](#)

[7] Sen, A. Inequality reexamined: Oxford University Press. 1992.