

UNITED KINGDOM AND IRELAND MARCÉ SOCIETY (UKIMS) NEWSLETTER

Spring/Summer 2026

Welcome

Welcome to our latest updates from the UK and Ireland regional group of the International Marcé Society! This newsletter will be circulated to UKIMS members twice yearly to provide updates on recent and upcoming events and other news that may be of interest.

Who we are

UKIMS was formed in 2004 and represents members of the International Marcé Society residing in the UK and Ireland.



The International
Marcé Society
for Perinatal Mental Health

Members come from a range of professional backgrounds but all share a passion for perinatal mental health and a commitment to improve the mental health and wellbeing of all families.

UKIMS Board members

Chair: Claire Wilson
Vice-Chair: Roxanne Keynejad
Secretary: Nicole Votruba
Treasurer: Louise Howard
Pippa Aspin
Madeleine Benton
John Cox

Michael Craig
Jan Cubison
Clare Dolman
Liz Dudeney
Abigail Easter
Vivette Glover
Jane Hanley

Ian Jones
Rose Meades
Marwa Nofal
Susan Pawlby
Sue Smith
Thanos Tsoumpris



Save the date: UKIMS Conference 2027

We are pleased to confirm that the Great Hall at King's has been booked for the **annual UKIMS conference on 12 February 2027**. Please save the date!

A call for abstracts will be circulated in early autumn. We look forward to showcasing research and collaboration from across the UKIMS community.

We would love to feature your latest updates in our future newsletters! If you have any related news—whether it's a recent achievement, award, or an upcoming event that you are planning—please share it with us. Please send any news items via email to ukimarcésociety@gmail.com



Special issues open for submissions

- Submissions are invited for a special issue of Behavioral Sciences on substance and alcohol use in the perinatal period. [Find details here.](#)



Upcoming 29 May 2026: Claire Nacamuli Prize on Postnatal Depression

The Psychiatry Research Trust has launched a **new £1,250 prize** recognising **innovative unpublished research on postnatal depression by early-career researchers**.

The award can support conference travel and registration costs.

Eligible applicants include PhD students, postdoctoral researchers, trainee doctors, and equivalent roles.

Applications close on 29 May 2026. [Full details here.](#)

Mental Health During and After Pregnancy UK Parliament POSTnote

Congratulations to all UKIMS members whose work was cited in the recent UK Parliament POSTnote on Mental health during and after pregnancy.



The report draws on contributions from many researchers across the field and highlights the importance of evidence-based research in informing parliamentary understanding and policy discussions around perinatal mental health.

You can read the report here: [Mental health during and after pregnancy.](#)

We are pleased to see contributions from so many UKIMS members recognised in this important publication.

Marcé Regional Groups Representative

We now have **representation on the International Marcé Board** through the Regional Groups Representative, with Nicole Reilly representing regional groups including UKIMS.

Nicole will share reflections and feedback gathered from regional groups on member engagement, growth, and local activities.

Protecting Beginnings: Reflections from UKIMS 2026

by Clàudia Aymerich



I'm Clàudia Aymerich, a psychiatrist and postdoctoral researcher at King's College London. My background is in psychotic disorders and the prevention of severe mental illness, yet over recent years I've repeatedly found myself drawn back to perinatal psychiatry. Initially, this came through clinical work leading a liaison service in a hospital with a NICU, supporting families – especially mothers and babies – through profoundly difficult situations. More recently, I've been involved in perinatal research projects including the [MiBirth Study](#), which explores factors shaping mode of delivery and related outcomes. This February, I was invited to present findings from the study at the Marcé Society's UKIMS Conference in London.

2026 was not my first UKIMS Conference. I attended as a delegate two years ago, and even then it stood out from other congresses for its warmth, collegial atmosphere, and strong clinical relevance. This year, that sense of relevance felt even more immediate – perhaps because I am currently pregnant with my first baby. The conference featured thoughtful presentations across a broad range of topics. Some focused on under-recognised aspects of pregnancy with major implications for mental health. Dr Hamilton Morrin presented fascinating findings on hyperemesis gravidarum and postnatal mental health outcomes, while Alyssa Despotis explored the lasting psychological impact of labour-related fears.



Other talks examined the relationship between severe mental illness and the perinatal period. Gabriella Lewis discussed long-term outcomes following postnatal psychosis, and Jenny Gong presented work on birth outcomes among women with pre-existing mental health difficulties. Pregnancy and childbirth are also deeply social experiences. Dr Billie Lever Taylor highlighted the needs of women involved in care proceedings, while Dr Juan Chart Pascual explored how public discourse on social media does not always align with clinical and research priorities in perinatal mental health. The conference also showcased ambitious approaches to addressing perinatal mental health challenges. Madeleine Kirkpatrick presented the SNAPER-PND study, and Professor Colette Hirsch shared innovative digital interventions for perinatal anxiety.



The presentation that left the strongest impression on me, however, was delivered by Yafa Ajweh, who spoke about the work of the Gaza Infant Nutrition Alliance (GINA) and its "Digital Villages of Care" initiative. Yafa described circumstances of unimaginable hardship, but also solidarity, agency, and the importance of practical support during crisis. Her talk demonstrated how perinatal care can become a grounding and profoundly meaningful intervention, even in the harshest settings. One mother supported by GINA said: "When I breastfeed, I forget there's war outside."

In many ways, I thought that quote captures what I took home from UKIMS this year: the perinatal period is not only a time of vulnerability, but also a window of extraordinary potential. It is where biology, relationships, services, inequality, policy, and culture collide – and where small, well-placed interventions can have disproportionately large effects.





New Board member spotlight



Dr Madeleine Benton is an NIHR Advanced Fellow in Perinatal Psychology at the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience at King's College London. She leads innovative, interdisciplinary research at the intersection of maternal mental and physical health, with a strong commitment to reducing health inequalities through interdisciplinary collaboration. She is also the co-lead of the Women's Mental Health Module on the Mental Health Studies MSc.

Dr Rose Meades is a Senior Research Fellow at City St George's, University of London, whose research focuses on perinatal mental health assessment, including anxiety, depression, and suicidality. She has led and collaborated on national studies examining the acceptability, effectiveness, and implementation of perinatal mental health care within UK maternity services, with a focus on improving equitable and evidence-based care for women and families during the perinatal period.



Dr Marwa Nofal is a Higher Trainee in General Adult Psychiatry at North London Foundation Trust with a special interest in perinatal psychiatry. She previously led the Mental Health Research Network of Egypt and has a strong interest in research collaboration, trainee engagement, and developing inclusive professional networks across the UK and internationally. She is keen to support stronger connections and opportunities for collaboration within the Marcé Society community.

Dr Elizabeth (Liz) Dudeney is a Research Fellow at the Centre for Maternal and Child Health Research, City St George's, University of London, with expertise in perinatal suicidality, mental health assessment, and applied health research. She is currently involved in work exploring the acceptability and future development of the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale to improve inclusivity and relevance across diverse perinatal populations.



Dr Thanos Tsoumpris is a Consultant Perinatal Psychiatrist who has worked across two London NHS Trusts since 2019, with interests in service development, medical education, and clinical research. He has contributed to the development of a perinatal psychiatry training credential through the Royal College of Psychiatrists and is currently involved in developing a perinatal neurodevelopmental pathway at South London & Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust.

Perinatal Mental Health on Voice of Islam

by Prof Vivette Glover, Imperial College London



I was asked to give two interviews on The Breakfast Show for Voice of Islam recently. The first was on the link between prenatal depression, anxiety and stress and the outcome for the child. The second was on the perinatal mental health of fathers "The Silent Struggle: Why Paternal Mental Health Deserves Attention". I was very impressed with the quality of the interview in each case. In the first they were interested in the role of genetics, and why some traits were very genetically determined, and some more susceptible to environmental influence. I think this is a really interesting question and it made me consider it more.

In the second they were interested in how it can be hard for fathers to admit any mental problem and how to help. Voice of Islam, recorded in London and broadcast around the world. I would be interested if anyone know anything more about it. You can [**Listen here**](#).

The International Conference on Maternal Mental Health in Africa (ICAMMHA) in Harare, Zimbabwe, December 2025

by Dr Sue Pawlby

I was privileged to attend ICAMMHA in Harare in December 2025. I like to think of myself as half African, having lived in Rwanda, Uganda and Nigeria and visited 22 African countries. My first stay was for two years in Rwanda in the 1970s before returning to Nottingham for doctoral and clinical work in Child Development. I later returned to Nigeria, where I began making films of mothers and babies, work that has continued to shape my clinical and research interests over the past 50 years. It felt like the fulfilment of a dream to see maternal mental health becoming an essential part of health policy discussions across Africa. One of my current aims is to ensure babies are fully included within the maternal mental health agenda. In the UK, recognising the infant within the perinatal dyad has taken decades, and I hope babies will remain central to perinatal work in Africa. There can be no perinatal mental health without a mother and baby – and, importantly, a father too.

It was a joy to attend ICAMMHA alongside delegates from 14 African countries, both anglophone and francophone. The conference theme was "Empowering Mothers: Bridging Mental Health and Maternal Care Across Africa", with presentations spanning 12 broad themes including mental wellbeing, stigma, trauma, poverty, climate change,

fathers' involvement, innovative treatments, and early parent-infant relationships. The conference was lively and collaborative, with networking in both French and English – and many other African languages I could not speak. The energy in the room was palpable, and I left hopeful that maternal and infant mental health will continue to become a strategic priority across Africa. As Nelson Mandela said, "It is in (y)our hands, to make a better world for all who live in it." As Nelson Mandela said, "It is in (y)our hands, to make a better world for all who live in it."



A rose by any other name....
by Sue Smith

*September 2012
The sun shines
A train from Cardiff to Londinium
UKIMS awaits
At the Athenaeum*

*Intellectual stimulation abounds
Then
An AGM
At which
Ian Jones passeth Chair
To Michael Craig
I take Michael's
Still warm seat
As Vice-chair
To minute take
At board meetings
Assembled by me*

*14 years pass
Vice-chair becometh Secretary
Chair becometh President
Vice-President doth appear
As new*

*I taketh minutes
Landline cradled between ear and shoulder
Who speaks?
Then to mobile phone
With airpods
Still, who speaks?*

*Covid bringeth Zoom
Hark I see who speaks
At last!*

*Then
Claire Wilson
Bursts forth
With Teams
And its transcript
Who be Terry Nickel?*

*And finally
It is time
To give way
To new blood
Nicole Votruba
Taketh my still warm seat
Wrangle the Gmail account
From my reluctant hands*

And go forth



**Thank you, Sue,
for your many years of
fantastic service and
commitment to UKIMS!
From the Board**