

## CoramBAAF Conversations | Post adoption depression transcript

00:00:00 Jane Poore

Good afternoon. Hello, I'm here with Doctor Lynn Snow. Lynn has been doing some work in to post adoption depression, which affects some adopted parents. And you'll go on to tell us a bit about other people potentially too. And we know that it can have really devastating effects for that.

00:00:20 Jane Poore

Period post placement and we've had serious case reviews in safeguarding in the UK, where this was a theme Lynn's recently been doing some work with the Churchill Fellowship, which allows her to study how different adoption agencies are teaching.

00:00:36 Jane Poore

That plan and identifying it and the supporting a doctor through it. So welcome, Lynn. Do you want to tell us about yourself and how you came to be doing?

00:00:46 Jane Poore

This piece of.

00:00:47 Dr Lynn Snow

Work. Yeah. Sure. Thank you, Jane. So, yes, I'm a paediatrician. That's a children's doctor. I'm designated doctor. Looked after children in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

00:00:57 Dr Lynn Snow

And that's a strategic level role. But also I'm a frontline clinician. So I see children for their health assessments as they come into care.

00:01:06 Dr Lynn Snow

The element of the Churchill Fellowship was I saw an advert and I applied and was shortlisted and interviewed and to look. My application was based around looking specifically at post adoption, depression and what we could learn from other countries. Because it's a travel fellowship that allows us to travel.

00:01:26 Dr Lynn Snow

So that we could bring that back to the UK and perhaps adjust what we're our practises.

00:01:32 Dr Lynn Snow

Yeah, to try and improve what we're doing, as you said, Jane, sadly, the the children that were impacted through the serious case reviews, I felt that we could, we could, our practises could improve but.

00:01:43 Jane Poore

That's really interesting.

00:01:45 Jane Poore

If we if.

00:01:46 Jane Poore

We bring that back to the UK. What? What have you learned about how pad is approached in this this country and how agencies work with their adopters?

00:01:56 Dr Lynn Snow

So the focus of my research obviously is overseas, but I have done had quite a lot of conversations with with different.

00:02:04 Dr Lynn Snow

People around the UK and.

00:02:06 Dr Lynn Snow

And I think my response to that would be that practise is quite variable. Agencies know about post adoption depression, which is great. I don't think we could have said that 10 or 15 years ago, so they.

00:02:17

Nothing.

00:02:18 Dr Lynn Snow

Are aware of.

00:02:19 Dr Lynn Snow

It they are talking about it with their adopters, but how much they're talking about it is.

00:02:26 Dr Lynn Snow

Depends on both the agency and on different practitioners. Some have incredibly good practise and I think based in their own experiences which leads them to to change what they do.

00:02:38 Dr Lynn Snow

But there are leaflets. There are videos that used and in one place they were. They were spent, they said they gave their doctors homework to very much specifically look at this topic so that they could then talk about it as part of the home study. So. So variable. And I think potential for.

00:02:46

And.

00:02:53

Yeah.

00:02:57 Dr Lynn Snow

Ensuring that that is more standardised across.

00:03:00 Jane Poore

And and built into the preparation of the doctors as well as.

00:03:04

Yeah.

00:03:05 Jane Poore

Waiting for that post adoption support phase. Yeah. Yeah. So if you're thinking about practitioners or friends and family or somebody where they've had a child place with them recently, what what would be the common signs for them to look out?

00:03:08 Dr Lynn Snow

Very definitely yes.

00:03:25 Jane Poore

For that might indicate that somebody's struggling with with post or doctrine placement.

00:03:32 Dr Lynn Snow

The the signs can be quite variable. Obviously they depend from person to person. Some people have much more physical symptoms, so they may be complaining of unexpected aches and pains, recurrent tummy problems.

00:03:46 Dr Lynn Snow

Headaches. Just kind of chronic pain.

00:03:48 Dr Lynn Snow

League a change of appetite. But then?

00:03:50 Dr Lynn Snow

There are also.

00:03:51 Dr Lynn Snow

The sort of slightly more what we would talk about emotional based responses where there might be lack of concentration. People become forgetful, they have a reduction in pleasure, just not wanting to do things, not wanting to engage a sudden rise in anxiety and.

00:04:08 Dr Lynn Snow

And people talk about feeling inadequate and then doubting their decision to become a parent. Yeah. And so it's sort of quite fundamental to their sort of self belief, but it's really important to note that it, it doesn't matter if you're male or female, doesn't matter if you're the primary care or the secondary care.

00:04:26 Dr Lynn Snow

You don't have to have preceding mental health problems, and it can be adoption and some of the studies are beginning to suggest that it can also impact on others who are taking on permanent care through through other means, such as our kinship carers as well. So yeah, need to be aware of it for for a whole range of people.

00:04:40 Jane Poore

Yeah.

00:04:45 Jane Poore

And do we know why it happens then?

00:04:47 Dr Lynn Snow

There's been lots of research looking at different variables and trying to say is it because you had depression in the past? And as I've said that that hasn't held to be true where the research is headed is that it appears to be based around unmet expectations.

00:05:05 Dr Lynn Snow

So in the pre adoptive phase, creating expectations about what it will be like to be an adoptive.

00:05:11 Dr Lynn Snow

Parent and those expectations not being met and that causing kind of a psychological disconnect for that person. And as I mentioned earlier, that sense of loss of self esteem because you're not meeting your own expectations as parents and then there will be expectations in the child so on paper.

00:05:32 Dr Lynn Snow

Having create read about a child and having potentially kind of created this picture and the reality of then living with that child being very very different, so around unmet expectation.

00:05:43 Dr Lynn Snow

Actions potentially also the idea of that attachment to that child not happening immediately. Yeah, I think the expectation is I would, you know, I'll fall in love with them. I'll be the perfect parent. But actually things take time and sometimes I'm not the perfect parent and I I need to be, you know, kind to myself around that.

00:05:55

Yeah.

00:06:04 Dr Lynn Snow

So. So that's where the the main theories seem to be to be.

00:06:07 Jane Poore

So there are a lot of parallels with with post Natal depression, actually, but presumably without the hormonal physiological changes.

00:06:16 Dr Lynn Snow

Yes, but yes, there are.

00:06:18 Dr Lynn Snow

There are a lot of parallels.

00:06:20 Dr Lynn Snow

But I think there are some kind of some unique pressures for adoptive parents and for parents. The the idea of of sometimes the the child's trauma reigniting traumas that doctors may have been through themselves, maybe through fertility.

00:06:23 Jane Poore

Yeah.

00:06:39 Dr Lynn Snow

With kinship care, as it could be intergenerational trauma, so those are some of the sort of unique elements that we need to be considering. So whilst it's akin to post Natal depression, I think there is a unique set of circumstances as well.

00:06:50 Jane Poore

Yes, some very unique circumstances. Yeah. Yeah, that's very interesting.

00:06:56 Jane Poore

So how can health and social work professionals work together to identify where people might be vulnerable to post adoption depression?

00:07:07 Dr Lynn Snow

It's really important that health and social.

00:07:09 Dr Lynn Snow

Care work together, I think.

00:07:10 Jane Poore

Yeah.

00:07:11 Dr Lynn Snow

There there is a bit of.

00:07:12 Dr Lynn Snow

A tendency for.

00:07:14 Dr Lynn Snow

Adoption to be the realm of the adoption agency and therefore the.

00:07:17 Dr Lynn Snow

Social.

00:07:17 Dr Lynn Snow

Because, but actually there is a really important role for health.

00:07:23 Dr Lynn Snow

Initially obviously in.

00:07:24 Dr Lynn Snow

The preparation around the adoption, medical advisors and their medical advice that they write as as doctors are being assessed and and thinking about the the Cumbria recommendations that the the mental health of the applicants.

00:07:37 Dr Lynn Snow

Of the adopters needs to be revisited at points of transition and I think that's really helpful way of kind of looking at it because we know that those points of transition when when there is more pressure for people, so, so that's absolutely vital.

00:07:52 Dr Lynn Snow

I think all professionals who are in contact with that family need to be aware of the risks and and what the elements are that are at play for, for for that family. So that would include GP's because obviously people might go to their GP seeking support because it's outside of their social care and home study.

00:08:12 Dr Lynn Snow

Assessment sort of.

00:08:13 Dr Lynn Snow

Government and so we need GP's to be aware and maybe there is, there's a role for for social care in supporting GP's to understand adoption and permanency and the impact and trying not to preempt the findings of of my study. But I'm quite keen that health is.

00:08:24 Jane Poore

Yeah.

00:08:33 Dr Lynn Snow

They play a bigger role. They they have a unique role that they go in and visit families.

00:08:38 Dr Lynn Snow

And at the moment they will do new birth visits and look specifically at post Natal depression. And I really would like to see some equity for created families through different models, so that the adoption or kinship. So that's something I'm I'm wanting to work on as as part of the findings of the study.

00:08:52 Jane Poore

Yeah, yeah.

00:08:56 Jane Poore

Yeah.

00:08:58 Jane Poore

Yeah, I can see that. That would be a valuable input. I mean, when you refer to the Cumbria review, there was a a multi agency group put together to look at the findings from that really sad case.

00:09:12 Jane Poore

And I know that part of that was to try and support GP in learning about what we do with the information.

00:09:21 Jane Poore

And social services, what we do with that information that they give to us and the importance of maintaining that up-to-date connection, because yes, those those through through cases all have very.

00:09:32 Jane Poore

Similar similar situations. So how do we support a doctors in that post placement phase to prevent the breakdown of of placements? Because we do know that some of these placements sadly get to the point where a doctors or prospective doctors can no longer cope and and the child has to return to.

00:09:54 Dr Lynn Snow

Air. Yes, I think it's it's very much about being proactive, OK.

00:09:58 Dr Lynn Snow

I think if workers are conscious of the emotional impact of the placement on cars.

00:10:06 Dr Lynn Snow

Of and sort of proactively looking for changes in in their mental health. I think that's, you know, certainly the first step I think we need to remove the stigma. We need to be saying that this happens and and and it happens in about depending on which study you read between 10 and 15% of the doctors have.

00:10:26 Dr Lynn Snow



You know, low mood, not necessarily to the point of of full depression. So yes, removing the stigma saying it happens and going back to that theory, I was talking about around unmet expectations, helping people reframe those.

00:10:39 Dr Lynn Snow

So instead of the belief, I need to be the perfect parent. Yeah, it's I I need to be the best parents I can be. But I need to be gentle on myself when if things go wrong and and and learn from mistakes, I think the again going back to that theory around and the expectations of other people. I think the friends and family training that.

00:10:59 Dr Lynn Snow

A lot of agencies have now undertake is really helpful so that.

00:11:03 Jane Poore

Using family network names. Yeah, yeah.

00:11:04 Dr Lynn Snow

Yes, yes. And and it'll be called different things in different places to prevent those comments, those unhelpful comments where, you know, a a friend or a carer might say.

00:11:07 Jane Poore

Yeah.

00:11:14 Dr Lynn Snow

But you've always wanted this. Why are you feeling so miserable to? Because if they have a better understanding of what the pressures are around adoption, then then they would be able to better support. And I think also encouraging our health professionals. And that would include myself and my colleagues to be more adoption aware I know.

00:11:17

Yes.

00:11:34 Dr Lynn Snow

In in states, for example, they have a curriculum that mental health professionals can.

00:11:40 Dr Lynn Snow

To take to help them understand about adoption and the needs of adoptive families. So I think it would be really, really good to have something like that here in the UK.

00:11:49 Jane Poore

Yeah, yeah, sounds really good. So you're going to the states in July. What are you hoping to learn or anticipating to bring back?

00:12:00 Dr Lynn Snow

Well, that's the key really. I think it's it's wanting to bring it back. So I chose to go to the states because the first ever article that described in.

00:12:09 Dr Lynn Snow

In literature post adopt.

00:12:10 Dr Lynn Snow

Depression was back in 1995 in the states, and then there was a whole swathe of of research and seminal research by Professor Foley, again based in the states, so very much wanted to go there, thinking that they'd had the research in place for quite a long time. And surely, you know, they must have moved research into practise.

00:12:31 Dr Lynn Snow

And and there would be some some really good practise out there.

00:12:32 Jane Poore

Yes.

00:12:35 Dr Lynn Snow

It's actually been really hard work to track that down, but I have found a couple of adoption agencies where they they certainly have policy in place both for training their workers, training their adopters and then to screen their adopters using the actually what we call the Willy.

00:12:54 Dr Lynn Snow

Questionnaire which is.

00:12:57 Dr Lynn Snow

Used for post Natal depression in the UK so so it's exactly the same that that they're using it for, for adopters and and yes, absolutely. So I'm. I'm really hoping I'm going to go out and meet all these people, learn much more about their practises and then hopefully be able to bring some of that back and and and.

00:13:05 Jane Poore

Sounds good.

00:13:07 Jane Poore

Yeah.

00:13:17 Dr Lynn Snow

Challenge the the UK practise through.

00:13:20 Jane Poore

Excellent. That sounds sounds really good.

00:13:22 Jane Poore

So are you still looking for a practise examples from from the UK? Can our Members get in touch with you if they want to share their experiences with you?

00:13:32 Dr Lynn Snow

Absolutely. I mean I'm, I'm I think the more examples we get the the better our practise would become in the UK. So examples from other countries outside of the United States. I'm I'm also hoping to visit Denmark and Sweden. But yes, anybody out there who's who's got other examples and yes, please do let me know and you can get in.

00:13:52 Dr Lynn Snow

Contact with me through my nhs.net e-mail.

00:13:55 Jane Poore

Thank you. Man. That sounds really interesting. Really look forward to hearing your findings and.

00:14:01 Jane Poore

Hopefully we'll begin to put together some learning from research for us at some point in the future as well. So we'll have you back to talk about your.

00:14:09 Dr Lynn Snow

Findings. I'd love to do that. Thank you very much.

00:14:12 Jane Poore

Thank you. Hope it all goes well and for those of our Members who are interested in post adoption support, we've got a conference coming up, which is an in person conference here at the Corum campus and it's on the 11th of March.

00:14:28 Jane Poore

And that's looking at contemporary insights into post adoption support and it should be quite a good day and good practise guide assessment support for adopted children and their families in England by Doctor John Simmons and Caroline Thomas is going to be launched at that event and people can book in through the website.