

## INTRODUCTION

### **Special issue: International approaches to sex offender risk assessment and management**

Sexual abuse is an international issue that does not recognise borders or jurisdictions. As a community of researchers, practitioners, and professionals we are constantly improving our knowledge base around sexual abuse, those who perpetrate sexual abuse as well as how to prevent and respond to sexual abuse. The more that we share our knowledge, research and skills with each other the better that we all get at responding to and ending sexual abuse.

This special edition started as an international roundtable at the Annual ATSA (Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers) conference in Kansas City in 2017, which was organised by the ATSA international committee, which had representatives from 9 countries (UK, Belgium, USA, Canada, Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, Italy, & Germany). The symposium speakers were members of ATSA and some were members of other international, sexual abuse treatment organisations (IATSO, NOTA, ANZATSA, ATSA-NL, & CoNTRASTI-TI). The idea behind the roundtable was to discuss and understand international approaches to the management of people that have committed sexual abuse. The roundtable was a great success with well over 100 attendees and lots of positive feedback. Afterwards we, the speakers, agreed that it would be good to do something with the presentations so that they could be accessible and of use to a wider audience. While at the ANZATSA conference in New Zealand at the end of 2017 I met with Maaiké about maybe showcasing the presentations in an edition of "Sex Offender Treatment"; which what you now see before you.

We asked all the speakers at the original symposium to prepare a 4,000 word paper based on their presentation and all did, although replacement authors were needed for one speaker who was unavailable. During the process of putting the special edition together we asked additional authors from countries not represented at the symposium to contribute and received contributions from an additional three countries (Israel, Singapore, and Australia). The authors are academics, researchers, professionals, or therapists/treatment providers with each bringing their own thoughts and views on sexual abuse and related practices in their own countries. The special edition highlights that we have similar issues internationally but that we have different ways of responding to them, and that we are not all on the same page in terms of our research and evidence. The special edition highlights the role that westernised approaches to treatment, policy, and practice around sexual abuse (especially

from the USA & Canada) have played in informing the global debate, but that they have not shaped it in the way that we may have originally thought. As the special edition has representatives from IATSO, ATSA, NOTA, ANZATSA, ATSA-NL and CoNTRASTI-TI included in it we reached out to this organisations for their thoughts on the importance of international collaboration;

One of the main goals of the International Association for the Treatment of Sexual Offenders (IATSO) is to support and promote the exchange of knowledge and information about the opportunities to prevent sexual violence. On the one hand, we need to know how offender structures are working in a globalized world, to combat effectively sources of immense human sorrow like child sex tourism, the monstrous worldwide operating child pornography industry, or the often highly networked organized crime structures for human trafficking. On the other hand, we are advocating for a humane, dignified, ethical, and effective treatment of sexual offenders throughout the world, to help these persons to refrain from further offenses. For all these tasks we need to share our knowledge and to further support our international networks. Therefore, IATSO and particularly the colleagues who are involved in the publication of our IATSO e-journal, "Sexual Offender Treatment (SOT)", are proud to provide so many international colleagues a combined platform for sharing their experiences. **Martin Rettenberger, Germany, Secretary General IATSO**

There is an increased recognition that policies and practices for the evaluation, treatment and management of individuals who have engaged in sexually abusive behaviour should be evidenced-based and collaboratively developed. As a result, our field has evolved from working in silos to developing multilevel and multinational partnerships and collaborations to prevent sexual abuse. This special issue represents the results of this international ongoing effort based on the recognition that sexual abuse is a human problem that concerns us all; progress in our field will be exponential when we no longer let physical or geographical boundaries limit us. **Franca Cortoni, President, ATSA**

One of the key factors for contributing to safer communities in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand is collaboration and partnership between practitioners, professionals, researchers, service users, and communities. As a major voice for the sexual abuse field in our region, ANZATSA is proud to have developed local, national, and international linkages and relationships with expertise that speaks to the treatment needs of adults, adolescents, and children who have histories as perpetrators and/or survivors of abuse. The maintenance and

growth of these networks is paramount for ensuring ongoing participation in a global dialogue, being informed of international practice standards, and creating spaces for our members (and their associated communities) to reflect and discuss “what works”. Working together with local and international input and support enhances and develops us as a community of practice. **William Wainwright & Armon Tamatea, ANZATSA executive**

Sexual abuse knows no international boundaries. Preventing sexually abusive behaviour and combatting its effects therefore requires concerted and co-ordinated international effort. Sharing knowledge from research and best practice approaches across national boundaries is therefore necessary in the fight against those whose sexual behaviour harms others. Whilst our national associations support activity in our local jurisdictions, we have much to learn from our colleagues elsewhere in the world and we are stronger together. Therefore, as Chairperson of NOTA in the UK and Republic of Ireland, I am delighted to support this important special edition. **Simon Hackett, Chair, NOTA.**

At a time in which forming international collaborations has never been simpler, we, the Dutch Chapter of ATSA (NL-ATSA) realize their necessity ever more. Ever since NL-ATSA's origin, we have greatly been investing in building a bridge between the Netherlands and Belgium as well as in collaborations with colleagues from all over the world. By facilitating the exchange of research ideas and results between our countries, several new collaborations between academic organizations have been made possible. Likewise, practitioners have benefited from this Netherlands-Belgium alliance: they now get ample opportunities to learn from each other's best-practices. Hence, NL-ATSA and its members reap the benefit of international collaborations every day. We strongly believe that international collaborations are the way forward and should be extended whenever and wherever possible. These collaborations do not only fuel new ideas for both research and practice, but they also boost the self-confidence and motivation of researchers and practitioners in their challenging everyday work. **Kasia Uzieblo, past-president of NL-ATSA, & Marije Keulen-de Vos, president of NL-ATSA**

Collaborating to this special edition is a great opportunity for knowing what is going on in our countries. The importance of international collaboration among those who work in research and treatment of sexual abuse can be hardly overestimated, as well as sharing practices and personal experiences. In countries where the public institutions don't provide

means for research and treatment of the abusers, which is the case of Italy, we are too often alone: “Why do you waste your time working with those monsters?!” we are regularly asked. The international community remind us that we are doing a crucial job to prevent sexual abuse. **Carla Maria Xella, CoNTRASTI-TI**

I just want to thank all the authors for their contributions and thank IATSO, as well as the board of “Sex Offender Treatment”, for facilitating the publication of this special edition. I hope that this special edition is of interest to you and that you gain some additional insights from reading it.

Kieran McCartan, PhD