

# Balint Leadership Training Workshop

Auckland, October 2011

with Ann Sinclair and John Barton

Friday 28th October 9 am to 5 pm and Saturday 29th 8:30 am to 12:30 pm

Ann Sinclair, immediate past President of the American Balint Society and a very experienced trainer of Balint Leaders is visiting New Zealand in October and November and will be involved in a series of Balint Leadership Training Workshops. In Auckland her co-leader will be John Barton.

The workshop will be limited to nine participants.

**If you are interested in this workshop please contact John Barton as soon as possible at [jbarton@aapt.net.au](mailto:jbarton@aapt.net.au)**

## **Leaders:**

**Ann Sinclair** is a Psychotherapist and Adjunct Assistant Professor of Family Medicine, Oregon Health & Sciences University, Portland, Oregon. She is the immediate past President of the American Balint Society and has trained Balint leaders in USA for many years.

**John Barton**, F.R.A.C.G.P. is a psychotherapist and Balint leader in Melbourne. He was a GP in Taihape and then Huntly 1983 to 1997 and GP in Melbourne 1997 to 2005. He is accredited as a Balint leader and trainer by the Balint Society of Australia and New Zealand.

**Cost:** \$290.00.

**Venue:** 9 Kotare St, Westmere, Auckland.

**Morning and afternoon teas** will be provided. Lunch is not included.

**Registration:** 1) Email John Barton at [jbarton@aapt.net.au](mailto:jbarton@aapt.net.au) asking to be registered.  
2) You will be sent a reply with information on how to pay.

## **Important notes**

1) It is important to participate in the entire program. The success of the workshop depends on group cohesiveness. Please arrive on time and attend all sessions.

2) Please be aware that Balint leadership training can stir up strong feelings. If you are at a vulnerable time in your life, you may want to consider attending this training at a later date.

*Application will be made for each **Balint leadership training Workshop** to be endorsed by The Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners (RNZCGP) for up to **11 hours CME** for General Practice Education Programme Stage 2 (formerly AVE), and Maintenance of Professional Standards (MOPS) purposes.*

### **Notes on this workshop**

A Balint group offers a safe and supportive setting to reflect upon difficult or intriguing cases with a focus on the doctor-patient (clinician-client) relationship. Balint leadership is challenging, highly rewarding and is best learnt experientially.

This workshop is for people interested in Balint groups for GPs and others, especially those interested in leading groups whether or not they have previous Balint experience. Participants will usually be GPs, medical educators, psychotherapists, psychoanalysts, and other health professionals. Participants are expected to be in clinical practice. The workshop is not intended to provide Balint leader accreditation or stand-alone training.

### **What are Balint groups?**

Balint groups are a form of reflective practice named after Hungarian born psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, Michael Balint who, with his wife Enid Balint, developed a unique method for understanding the doctor-patient relationship in London in the 1950s. This method has been refined over the past fifty years. Traditionally a Balint group is an ongoing group where the same GPs meet on a regular basis for months or years. Balint groups are an important part of GP training and ongoing education in UK, Europe and USA and there are a growing number in NZ and Australia. The method has spread to other professional groups including psychiatrists and other medical specialists, psychotherapists, psychologists, nurses, social workers, chaplains and more.

### **Balint groups help clinicians**

- Recognize they are not alone in having challenging interactions with patients
- Develop increased understanding and empathy for patients
- Explore how feelings and thoughts affect the clinician-patient relationship
- Expand their capacity and repertoire for handling difficult situations with patients

### **Workshop Description**

A number of Balint cases will be presented, each followed by time for reflection and discussion on the leadership. There will be opportunities for participants to present cases, to lead or co-lead sessions and to receive feedback. There will be a some didactic teaching and time for participants' questions and comment.

In a Balint case the presenter be invited to present a case where they have experienced a strong reaction, such as: distress, delight, frustration or uncertainty. The case is presented briefly and informally, emphasising the nature of the doctor-patient interaction and including the doctor's feelings and reactions. The group members then discuss the case with emphasis on the relationship rather than the clinical material.

The group is asked to empathize with both the doctor's and the patient's experience and to speculate about what thoughts and feelings each might be having. Diverse views often emerge, reflecting the group members' varied personalities and experiences. All ideas are allowed to "exist in the room" and there is no attempt to reach a "right" answer. The

leaders facilitate this process and do not act as experts. The underlying assumption is that "the knowledge is in the group".

The leaders' tasks are to provide a safe "container" for the group, and to facilitate the Balint process by ensuring both the presenter and the patient are adequately represented and keeping the the group on the task of reflecting on the relationship.

A Balint group is very different from the usual medical case presentation in that the members are strongly discouraged from making judgements, giving advice, or offering solutions. Discussion of clinical management is actively discouraged. We assume that all the group members are competent and know how to manage their patients/clients. This structure creates a place of safety where the participants can feel comfortable discussing the uncomfortable moments in the consultation.

This way of working can be difficult at first, but once learnt is a liberating experience, stimulating deeper thought and understanding. If you would like more information about Balint group work please contact John Barton. ([jbarton@aapt.net.au](mailto:jbarton@aapt.net.au))