

CNYPSCOPE



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President's Message

There has been a recent movement to pursue legislation to create a new level of mental health practitioner in New York State: a master's level psychology assistant. The background of this is as follows. With the passing of Autism Insurance Reform Law, applied behavioral analysts (ABAs) are now legally recognized as mental health care providers whose services should be reimbursed for autism care. However, ABAs are non-licensed individuals in New York and insurance companies typically do not reimburse those without a license. To address this issue, NYSPA has promoted an umbrella solution via a master's level psychology assistant under the supervision of a psychologist.

"...to survive economically over time in psychology, we are going to need to get creative in finding alternative sources of revenue with better reimbursement."

Here is a list of what is being proposed for the scope of a master's level psychology assistant:

"Psychological intakes, administration and scoring of non-projective psychological tests and assessments, assistance to psychologist in treatment interventions and planning such as biofeedback, applied behavior analysis, group therapy and other such psychological interventions; as well as data collection; psychological research, program evaluation; test construction and other psychological tasks as deemed necessary and/or appropriate to the setting, context or skills, training, experience and education of the assistant and supervisor."

That sounds very close to what a doctoral level psychologist does and it has long been promoted by the Executive Secretary of the State Psychology Licensing Board. The autism issue is the political mechanism to get this accomplished. Of course, the doctoral-level psychologist is supposed to be the supervisor of psychology assistants, but we have all seen how this often works in medical care: you are evaluated start to finish by a physician assistant, never evaluated by the doctoral level pro-

vider, and the note by the physician assistant is co-signed, sometimes without reading it thoroughly or reading it at all. The fact that the note is co-signed is what technically documents the supervision.

State and federal laws regarding insurance reforms will likely make the physician assistant model in medicine become a reality in mental health care throughout the country. This is

because with the U.S. Supreme Court upholding the Affordable Care Act and many states enacting their own insurance exchanges, millions of additional people will be able to access a resource (health care) with a finite number of providers.

Specifically, there are about million physicians and only 93,000 psychologists in the U.S. Without enough doctoral health care providers, non-doctoral health care providers (as assistants or independent practitioners) will be legally authorized and encouraged to provide such care, even if they are not licensed. Just as the growing physician shortage in the U.S. has resulted in the total number of physician assistants in this country to double from 40,469 in 2000 to 83,466 in 2010, we can probably expect similar doubling of growth in a psychology assistant profession if this becomes part of a national model of care.

While one solution is to produce more doctoral level psychologists, that solution is not as easy as it sounds given rising educational costs, poor insurance reimbursement, a poor economy with slow job growth, and the state of psychologist salaries. Consider the following: according to the U.S. Department of Labor's *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, median earnings for psychologists in 2008 were \$64,140 for clinical, counseling and school psychologists. Guess what the median cost of a psychology

WAYS TO BECOME MORE INVOLVED IN CNYPSCOPE...

- JOIN ONE OF THE COMMITTEES (OR START A NEW ONE!)
- PROMOTE PSYCHOLOGY WITH LOCAL LEGISLATORS
- WRITE AN ARTICLE FOR THE SCOPE
- ATTEND A CNYPSCOPE BOARD MEETING

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CNYPA Scope

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assistant is? It is \$52,000 (average = \$62,000). The base local salary in the SUNY system for psychologists is \$63,000. While psychologists have the potential to earn more than a psychology assistant over time, the closeness of median starting salaries is stunning, especially when compared to the discrepancy between the salaries of physicians and physician assistants. Specifically, while the median physician assistant salary is about \$90,000, the median physician salary for primary care physicians is about \$150,000 with median starting salaries up to \$465,000 for certain specialties (e.g., orthopedic spinal surgery) according to national survey data from Profiles Database.

Upcoming

CNYPA Board Meetings:

November 16

*December 7 holiday/
annual party at Alice
Honig's)*

*All meetings start at
1:15 and are held in
the 2nd Floor "Grand
Rounds" area of the
Upstate Psychiatry &
Behavioral Sciences
Building, 713
Harrison St.
Syracuse.*

Moreover, the salary discrepancies between physicians and physician assistants are much greater after six years of practice than between a psychologist and a psychology assistant. For example, Bureau of Labor statistics recently showed that clinical psychologists with six to nine years of experience earn around \$88,000 annually in individual private practice. Taking into account variability between surveys, this is a \$20,000 to \$30,000 increase in salary over 6 to 9 years. Comparatively, a primary care physician's salary increases about \$80,000 in the first six years.

In my opinion, to survive economically over time in psychology, we are going to need to get creative in finding alternative sources of revenue with better reimbursement. This means finding ways to become less dependent on insurance companies. To do so involves making yourself more marketable within psychology so you become someone who people (e.g., consumers, attorneys, independent medical examination companies) are willing to pay out-of pocket to evaluate and/or treat. Ways to make yourself more marketable includes specializing in a niche area of health care in your community, pursuing board certification, and making yourself known via publications (e.g., blogs, journal articles, book chapters, books, being cited in media articles/interviews), professional association involvement, and having a reputation for high quality professional work.

Paid speaking engagements can be lucrative if you can market yourself effectively as knowledgeable in a particular subject area. Long ago, I created an online health care encyclopedia (MedFriendly.com) that provides a significant supplement to my state salary in the form of online advertising fees. Some physicians have created concierge business models in which consumers pay a set annual cost for private individualized care outside of the auspices of insurance companies. Psychologists may want to consider doing the same, but for such efforts to be successful it is critical to establish and promote that you can provide a service over and above the social worker, applied behavioral analyst, etc., who will continue competing for declining insurance reimbursements.

Dominic Carone, Ph.D.
CNYPA President

A message from CNYPA member, Alice Honig

You may want to know that I recently completed two (hour-long each one) Webinars for the folks at Community Services for Children, in Allentown Pennsylvania. Masha Levin, their Professional Development Manager has just emailed me that already they have had some practitioners using these as learning materials. That feels exciting. Preparing the texts and coordinating with visuals and doing the audio work for Webinars was an exciting and challenging experience.

Be well,
ALICE HONIG

Go to <http://www.cscinc.org/northeast-regional-key/professional-development-webinars/> to view
Alice's webinars

We would love to hear what you've been up to lately!

Please forward any publication news, media appearances, awards received or any other accomplishments to cavalle@upstate.edu.



New CNYPA Membership Benefits

Your CNYPA President has been working hard for you to obtain benefits and discounts for being a CNYPA member. Here are just a few of the newest ones:

- CNYPA members now have the opportunity to purchase online video access to CNYPA continuing education programs. The first such program to have online video access was the latest dinner meeting entitled: A Talk with Dr. Norman Kelleay. *"An Overview of ACT (Acceptance and Commitment Therapy) from a Practitioner's Perspective."* Note that CNYPA members receive a significant discount. Go to: <http://cnypa.net/resources.html>.
- Receive an exclusive discount valid for 20% off all items at www.guilford.com by using the promotional code **CNYPA**.
- Enjoy a 20% discount and free shipping from Springer Publishing Company by using the discount code CNYPA20.
- CNYPA members also enjoy exclusive discounts from Avis and Budget Rental Car.
- The Taylor & Francis Company is offering discounted rates to CNYPA members many journals.

Please see <http://cnypa.net/resources.html> for more details.

Dr. Alice Honig has been busy!

Dr. Honig will be giving a presentation on “Tips for recognizing and easing stress in children” at the annual meetings of the National Association for the Education of Young Children in Atlanta, Georgia, November 8, 2012. Her session has been chosen, among only a few others, out of nearly 900 sessions, for audiotaping so that NAEYC can then market the tapes to those who were not able to attend.

The public relations firm KEH Communications has invited Alice to join their panel of experts in their media bureau to respond with interviews on selected topics in child development and care and parenting when requested by a variety of media..

Dr. Honig has also recently published an article in the International Journal of Adolescence and Youth. The article is a featured editorial on Teen Pregnancy.



The next CNYPA Scope will be published in January 2013.

That's plenty of time for you to contribute to the newsletter!

Please e-mail CNYPA Secretary, Michelle Cavallerano at cavallem@upstate.edu with any ideas or questions.

A Call for Nominations

There has been nothing more rewarding than serving as a board member and president of my professional organization here in Central New York. There is so much to do to support our field, and serving in this volunteer capacity has been my way of giving back in small yet meaningful ways.

Well here is your chance!

The Central New York Psychological Association is seeking nominations for several exciting positions within the organization. **Four of our board positions** are due to open for 2013, each carrying a two year term. We are also looking for anyone interested in the **secretary position**, the **treasurer**, and **president-elect**, each with a one year term. The president-elect goes on to serve as president and then as past president.

Feel free to nominate a dedicated colleague or yourself by e-mailing me at gesekphd@gmail.com.

Tanya Gesek, Ph.D.
Past CNYPA President

