

# Ten Highlights

## ASPPB 46<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of Delegates

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Mary E. Vandergoot, Ph.D., R.D. Psych, President Elect &  
ASPPB Delegate for the Saskatchewan College of Psychologists

# HIGHLIGHT #1

Key Note Address by  
Paul Nelson

## *Striving for Competence in the Assessment of Competence: Psychology's Professional Education and Credentialing Journey of Public Accountability*

- Begins with an historical overview of the North American journey
- Mid 1940s began the realization of need for psychologists following the war
- development of curriculum for Ph.D level training
- APA and credentialing issues
- For over 30 years the journey of “training” (i.e., institutions) and “professional credentialing” (individuals) developed in virtual independence; distinct but mindful of each other

# ...more on striving for competence

- In 1970 separateness became an issue with emergence of the “scientist-practitioner” model and need to revisit the “scientist” component in credentialing
- Psychology licensing across jurisdictions was always very variable
- Many questions about whether licensing actually protects the public
- Many questions about validity of measures of professional competence

# ...more on striving for competence

- Symposium in 1977 included APA, Education and Training Board, Council of Graduate Department Chairs, etc, where perspectives of education and licensure were shared:  
“Education and Credentialing”
- Emergence of court challenges to the practice of psychology
- 1975 Judge in District of Columbia ruled that psychology is an “amorphous, inexact, mysterious discipline” that is very different from “medicine and law” and does not encompass a definable “body of knowledge” and is not a training comparable to “professional training” in other disciplines—a shock for psychology!

# ...more on striving for competence

- Licensing exam for the American Association of State Board (1965)
- Led to development of designation criteria (ASPPB)
- Led to verifying curriculum content, transcripts
- EPPP started in 1970
- Criticism of EPPP led to validity studies in 1981 to 1983 and then again in 2003
- Development of psychometrically sound practice analysis (different domains of knowledge in different areas of practice) or across discipline areas

# ...more on striving for competence

- Evaluation of content validity of EPPP meant that knowledge was required and this led to focus on competencies
- Professional schools took the lead with focus on learning outcomes, knowledge domains in practice, performance competence versus knowledge competencies
- A turbulent period of accreditation

# ...more on striving for competence

- Assessment movement in higher education
- Emphasis on “outcomes assessment”
- Led to competency areas endorsed by the field
- Programs had to demonstrate that students had the skills and the attitudes
- Yet curriculum requirements hard to equate with competencies
- Need for richer measures of competence
- Need for consensus about meaning of competence

# ...more on striving for competence

- Enrollment of more student in psychology programs
- Insufficient numbers of high quality internships
- 1990's APIC with support from APA required more hours of practicum hours—it led to better internships—led to inflating of practicum hours
- What about developmental difference in the students?
- What about the quality of the practicum?
- How would hours of practicum reflect competencies?
- Various task forces on the articulation and education for competencies

# ...more on striving for competence

- Resulted in the definition and assessment model: the Developmental Model
- A culture shift: the developmental nature of practicum experiences
- The construct of competence is most important
- Because of “high stakes” credentialing
- Queries about format and content
- How to assess professional judgement and more integrative capabilities
- Problem solving: “training to the test” or “testing to the training”
- How does competence relate to notions about “entry level practice” or “readiness to practice”

# ...more on striving for competence

- Competence is more than just body of knowledge
- Challenges us to define what we mean by competence: competence for a novice versus competence for an expert
- Cultures of practice are diverse
- Contexts for practice are diverse
- Life long learning concept
- Effect of disciplinary actions on the profession
- Multiple stages of credentialing
- Leads to questions about the timing of the EPPP
- Report on APA Competency Benchmarks Workgroup

# ...more on striving for competence

**“Best way to predict the future, is to invent it”**

(author unknown)

- Need to move beyond knowledge base approach to more integrative issues such as differential diagnosis
- “competence” has different meanings at different stages
- EPPP is still the major national standard after 5 to 7 years on average of training for psychologists
- How are we protecting the public by preparing them for an exam
- What about maintenance of competence among those already licensed.
- If competence is a developmental construct, then our system needs to be dynamic and continuous
- After degree is usually the most important part of anyone’s education
- It is one thing to talk the talk (EPPP), another to walk the walk (practice)

# Comments by members of the audience to Paul Nelson's talk

- Weary of the many challenges in regulation
- Professional training is so long and drawn out
- EPPP should be taken earlier by students (often a 5 year gap between foundational knowledge acquisition and taking the EPPP)
- Higher order functions not assessed by EPPP
- Distance learning issues including quality of distance learning, need for a period of residency

# ...comments continued

- EPPP is only a snapshot of knowledge, but many faculty in training programs don't take the exam
- Need for behavioral markers for measuring competence as suggested by the APA Benchmark Conference
- Should we be trusting supervisors to provide accurate and honest information about students
- Need more consistency across jurisdictions
- Practicum hours are driven by student fears and perceived needs; however, hours are easily measured while competence is not
- "Competence?": a 1000 flowers grow in the garden of psychology

# HIGHLIGHT #2

## ASPPB Mobility Program

Kim Jonason

- Many Initiatives to improve mobility
- Oral exam dropped (no validity) to stop disenfranchising jurisdictions that did not require an oral exam
- Certificate of Psychology Qualification (CPQ) can be accessed (no oral exam required) and used as a mobility standard
- 52 jurisdictions have the CPQ
- Members of ASPPB with CPQ can adopt the Agreement of Reciprocity (in Canada, Ontario is the only one with this)
- ASPPB's Inter-Jurisdictional Practice Certificate is under development for temporary licensure in other jurisdictions (includes CPQ and attestation form, etc) is upcoming on ASPPB website

SASKATCHEWAN is where in this process? SEE MAP on ASPPB website—needs to be updated!

# Highlight #3

## Changes in Accreditation

Karen Cohen

- Quality assurance agenda in program accreditation for higher education include several trends (1) competencies, (2) outcomes you can measure, (3) transparency (e.g., for students), (4) pressures on accreditors to provide timely services, and (5) the “Spellings” report on accountability issues
- APA and CPA accreditation programs have had interactive and overlapping roles
- Phase out of need for APA accreditation creates new opportunities for collaboration between US and Canada
- How should we best partner with APA? Continues
- Equivalency of CPA/APA accreditation a given

# HIGHLIGHT #4

## Self-Assessment

Rick Morris

### Self Assessment

- Used by the Ontario College
- Quality assurance program for members
- Every other year administer to self the SAG and then a signed declaration
- Includes self evaluation and readiness for new area of interest or practice
- 99% return of declaration (2 reminder letters—if they don't send then required to send SAG)
- Studied the utility of the SAG; found wide variation in amount of detail; over 50% claimed they had met their goals

Also developing a method for peer reviews of member's practice includes travel and per diems (40,000 budget both programs)

SASKATCHEWAN?: Could we adapt SAG for our CED requirements

# HIGHLIGHT #5

## Item Development Update & Correcting Mistaken beliefs about the EPPP

Jack Schaffer on items:

- There is a committee for writing EPPP items & need for people to join
- Clear that we need people to assist with the writing of items who are “experts in format” and those who are “experts in content”.
- Workshops across the country are being piloted
- Need more items that involve “integration of knowledge”
- Factoid questions are easier whereas questions with scenarios requiring integration of ethics, etc.) are harder but may also have a greater relationship to competencies in practice

# ...more on the EPPP

Joan Grusec on correcting mistaken belief:

- ASPPB and PES (test development contractor) are non-profit organization that have no financial relationship with the test preparation centers advertised on the web; test materials of these companies are not created by ASPPB; ASPPB owns the items of the test
- No empirical evidence of lack of validity of the EPPP; the exam is based on a practice analysis of a large sample of psychologists surveyed about information they need to know in order to do their work
- Not possible to do a study in which you see if people who have passed the EPPP do better as practitioners; would require a controlled study

Robert Lipkins on current status:

- .95 reliability coefficients of EPPP
- On-line format for exam and practice exams

# HIGHLIGHT #6

## Practicum Training Standards, Issues & Regulation

Emil Rudolfo on practicum training:

No consensus on definition despite critical role in sequence of training events (practicum leads to readiness for internship)

Lack of national standard despite highly competitive market for predoctoral internships

Lack of integration into program goals

Lack of psychologists in training roles

Lack of consensus on # of hours needed & vaguely defined

Lack of consensus on what type of activities should count

How to evaluate competencies for “readiness for practicum” and then readiness for “internship”

How much can we trust supervisors ratings

Rare that supervisors at any level of training (practicum or internship) “fail” their students or rare that weaknesses are identified

# ...practicum standards continued

Jack Schaffer on practicum standards:

Two year study by APPIC found that the total number of practicum hours are inflated by students (self-reported).  
Why? Scared!

Need better definers for readiness for internship

Cheap labor versus quality training in practicums

Independence greatly varies on sites and access to psychologists

Face to face with supervisors, face to face with clients, and other “directness” issues of contact

Ron Ross on practicum training:

Supervisors ratings are not enough for evaluating performance

“Practica” means “education” not supervised practice

# HIGHLIGHT #6

## “Buzz Words & Queries”

- Standards of practicums relate to “competence” issues and readiness for the next step in the sequence of training
- Is practicum training a measure of “readiness” for internship?
- Are # of practicum hours a measure of competence?
- Should practicum hours be considered a supervised experience for licensure?
- Would using practicum hours for licensure affect the public adversely? Are consumers well served by using practicum training for licensure?
- Aren’t the expectations for independence and level of skills expected much lower for practicums than for internships?
- Practicums get students at “entry level for academic training” and then train them for “readiness for the internship” –thus it does not make sense to use practicum training for licensure?
- Students who are ready for internship begin at the “entry level to practice psychology” and thus the internship marks the “entry level into the profession” –thus it does make sense to use predoctoral internship training for licensure.
- What is incompetence?

# HIGHLIGHT #7

## Small Group Workshop on Practicum Standards Led by Barb Van Horne

- Practicum standards vary widely across jurisdictions
- Psychologists may not play major roles in practicum sites for psychology student
- Greater need for link between education requirements and readiness for internship and for licensure (just because practicum training does not mean entry level for the profession does not mean academic training should not be proactive in ensuring that student are trained in competencies for entry level practice in psychology)
- Public likely to be harmed by considering practicum training for “entry level into the profession” and thereby entry level into licensure

# HIGHLIGHT #7

## “Buzz words & queries”

- Practicum “hours” are not same as supervised practice in psychology
- Argument against using practicum hours for entry level practice or licensure can be made using public protection agenda
- Inflation of practicum hours a symptoms of lack of understanding of competency for readiness for internship training
- Supervisors reticent to “fail” or acknowledge below standard performance of students symptom of lack of tools, markers, definitions of competency
- Not knowing what to look for in terms of competency makes it harder to justify failures (or passes)
- Competencies required in practical (academic work) should be connected to readiness for internship (with a view to entry level licensure)
- Competencies required in internships should be connected to readiness for entry level practice and entry level licensure
- How can supervisors be monitored without micromanaging them
- Will standards for supervision become unreasonable and result in 23 “over regulation”

# HIGHLIGHT # 8

## Making ASPPB's Disciplinary Data Available to the Public Janet Pippin

- Working towards making disciplinary data available to the public as well as the jurisdictions is consistent with “consumer oriented” purpose of ASPPB
- Should public be able to query a psychologist by name to get a psychologist’s “disciplinary profile”?
- Only disciplinary data that is made known to the public in the jurisdiction should be available
- Before ASPPB gets this going the jurisdictions will need to review the information they already sent to the disciplinary data bank to ensure that it is information that is current and accurate (may need to revise “discipline action reporting forms”)
- There are difference between jurisdictions in what disciplinary data is made available to the public
- What types of descriptors or search criteria should be used
- Involves privacy legislations and human rights issues
- Need to proceed sensitively while focusing on public protection

# HIGHLIGHT #8

## “Buzz Words & Queries”

- Regulation as “consumer focused” (big buzz word)
- Do all disciplinary actions require “public reporting”?
- Why are there so many regional differences in “public reporting” of disciplinary actions?
- Are jurisdictions giving out too much or unnecessary information to ASPPB?
- How much of context needs to be preserved in such a data base for public consumption?
- Should ASPPB be a liaison between the jurisdiction and the public in this way?
- Does this mean that jurisdictions have less control over the data they supply to ASSPB? Should jurisdictions be contacted by consumers about a member’s discipline record?
- Would such psychologist profiles end up on the web e.g., google

# HIGHLIGHT # 9

Does publication serve the public interest?

Andrea Kowaz

- Canada's regulation of psychology is more case-law based; there is less uniformity, and less sophistication
- Does publication of name of psychologist serve the public interest
- Sampling of 3 Canadian jurisdictions reveals that there is differences in how information is disclosed to regulatory bodies including psychology (Ontario, Alberta & B.C. canvassed)
- In B.C. changes in legislation have had an uneven impact on information available to the public
- Wording may be important
- Publication policy in B.C. may depend on the severity of the action

# Highlight # 10

## Reflections on Developments in Professional Regulation

Tom O'Conner

Some key milestones: 27 year history of professional regulation in California

Complaint driven early history:

- Regulation initially complaint focused: sexual misconduct the major complaint and 0 tolerance policy adopted
- Late 1980s legislation changed and ongoing lobbying for criminal code; research on harmful effects key
- Consumer affairs department working closely with the board maintaining a “consumer focus”
- Pamphlet “Professional Therapy Never Includes Sex”
- By 1995 number of complaints about sexual misconduct tapered off. New primary complaint was and is custody access issues

# ...more on California's journey

## Utility of EPPP for entry level into practice

- California allows candidates to take EPPP prior to graduation based on data from ASPPB that candidates do better on it when they do it close to their education
- Research indicated it did bias older candidates—they lowered their passing score
- Further research by consumer affairs indicated that EPPP was valid in California
- Put end to “class action” suits by examinees who failed exam

# ...more on California's journey

## Utility of Oral exams

- Also evaluated by the consumer affairs department
- Could not be validated—too subjective
- Not an easy job to stop using them—some were passionate about keeping them
- Jan 2002 eliminated the Oral Exam
- Still sensitive issue; led to public hearings, has seemed to settle now

# ...more on California's journey

Utility of supplemental exam

- Working with consumer affairs on this
- On laws, regulations, and ethics
- Includes a practical component
- Also working on CPQ issue

Importance of recognizing that in California law they require the “minimum competence” or “entry level” for licensure

Evaluation for licensure must be “legally defensible”

# ...more on California's journey

Education standards for licensure

- Must be approved the board whether or not it is accredited

Consumer affairs & professional regulation closely aligned

- No personal agendas must interfere
- Includes importance of board member training

# HIGHLIGHT #10

## “Buzz Words & Queries”

- What is “minimum competence” for entry level into the profession?
- Oral exams are not valid and thus, why do they continue to be used as primary gateway to licensure?
- Regulation of psychology should not encompass a “personal” agenda for board members but should be consumer focused
- Boards need training in consumer focus

# THANKS!!!

For the experience of being Saskatchewan's delegate to ASPPB!!

The experience gave me:

- Greater insight into the regulation of psychology in North America
- The supportive role of ASPPB to regulators
- Our role in shaping the regulation of psychology
- Common problems and interests of all psychologists
- The importance of the consumer focus & role of the executive council
- The importance of the link between training and regulation
- The importance of networking with other jurisdictions about common concerns