

## **PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL STATE OF THE ACADEMY REPORT**

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As President of the American Academy of Clinical Neuropsychology (AACN), I am pleased to share with you the Annual State of the Academy Report. In doing so, I am aware that, try as I might, it seems likely that I will not be able to fully convey the degree to which our organization is active, vital, and energetic. Membership organizations are a reflection of member interest and involvement. In my view, our members are (pun intended) *psyched*.

As an example, there continues to be strong interest on the part of members to become involved in committee and task force work, and at the level of Board of Directors. This desire to be involved is essential to the health of AACN. In that last category of service, Bob Bilder and Leslie Rosenstein began their 5-year terms of office, and Susan McPherson renewed her term in office, in 2007. With individuals entering, there are also individuals exiting. Robb Mapou, past president and long-time board member, along with members Chris Grote and Joel Morgan, rotated off the board after years of service.

In last year's annual report I proffered the opinion that three key categories describe the health of a professional membership organization. These categories, in order of importance, were: (1) membership growth, (2) financial stability, and (3) service to the proverbial and literal "community" of our members. It is worth revisiting these categories with regard to activities and accomplishments of 2007.

### **MEMBERSHIP GROWTH**

As you know from reading your own copies, at the back of each issue of *The ABPP Specialist* there is a listing of the names of all new diplomates who passed the board examination process during the prior 6 months in each area of specialty practice. For years, Clinical Neuropsychology's list of new diplomates has rivaled that of Clinical Psychology, with both showing many more than the remaining 12

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specialties. Lately, as exemplified in the special 60th ABPP anniversary issue, Clinical Neuropsychology has on occasion had a longer list of new diplomates than Clinical Psychology, even though the latter has a *much* larger potential pool of applicants from which to draw candidates. In October 2006, the total number of clinical neuropsychologists who have been board certified through ABCN surpassed 600. In 2007, that figure grew substantially and is now well on its way to 700. I do not think there is any question that in the future Clinical Neuropsychology will become the specialty with the largest number of new diplomates every year. Unless altered by circumstances currently unforeseen, the trajectory of our growth over time assures that this will occur, and soon.

It may seem odd or unexpected to us in Clinical Neuropsychology, but for some of the ABPP Academies there is not a very strong relationship between the number of individuals passing the board examination and membership growth of the relevant Academy. That is, in some instances a relatively low percentage of new diplomates join the associated Academy. In our specialty, we enjoy the highest Academy membership percentage of diplomates, which, after excluding senior members who have gratis membership, is approximately 97% of those living.

The growth in new members is not the only indication we have of increased interest in becoming board certified in clinical neuropsychology. Data from Michael Westerveld, current President of the American Board of Clinical Neuropsychology (ABCN) Board of Directors, indicate that there are record numbers of individuals taking the written examination and the oral examination these days. In fact, in Portland, Oregon during the February 2007 International Neuropsychological Society meeting, a record high of 50 individuals took the written examination. As you know, the written examination is given an additional three times each year, and the 2007 total was 122, a yearly record high number of written examinations completed. Figure 1 shows a comparison of written examinations completed in recent years. The previous high had been set in 2006, with 83. Similarly, in October 2007 at the biannual oral examinations in Chicago, 33 candidates, a record number, were examined, which for the first time required expansion to three examiner cadres.

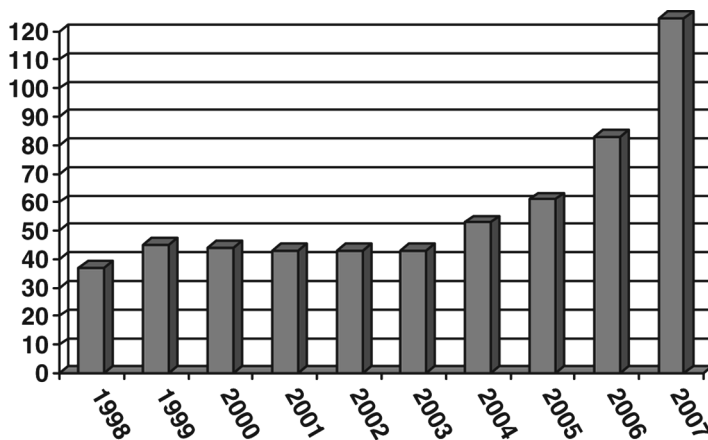


Figure 1 ABCN written examinations completed annually in the last 10 years.

To say that interest in, and pursuit of, board certification in clinical neuropsychology is high seems an understatement.

Many of our members have noticed the wonderful work of a group of AACN members who in 2001 established the peer support system known as BRAIN, which stands for Be Ready for ABPP in Neuropsychology. The work of BRAIN was so effective and noteworthy that in 2007 the AACN Board of Directors voted to make the BRAIN leadership an official committee, with the task of pulling together and coordinating all of our efforts to promote and support the application and preparation process for the ABCN examination. Specifically, the committee consists of Co-Chairs Kira Armstrong and Robin Hilsabeck and members Mike Kirkwood, Dean Beebe, and Lisa Stroup. It is in response to efforts such as these, and the prior and ongoing efforts of the mentoring program organized by Jacobus Donders, the perennial workshops at national conferences by Linas Bieliauskas and Diane Howieson, the study guide by Robb Mapou, and the never-ending, unbelievably strenuous, yet successful job of creating a fair and objective examination process by the ABCN Board of Directors over many years, that we have such interest and growth in board certification as we enter 2008.

To summarize, our membership growth compared to other ABPP specialties can be viewed as very strong, and will soon result in ABCN being in the number one position for annual growth of all the ABPP specialties. Moreover, we have a higher percentage of ABCN diplomates join after passing the board certification examination and remain Academy members than the other ABPP academies.

## **FINANCIAL STABILITY**

The AACN Board of Directors has been very careful in considering financial implications when planning for increased activities and increased benefits to our members. In addition, we have had the good fortune to have a truly stellar and meticulous treasurer, Mike McCrea, who has kept us well informed with accurate financial data and projections. As a result, our finances are stable and on solid ground. Members may have noticed that this year the Board created a new opportunity to make tax-deductible donations toward funding outcome studies. Projects like this and related opportunities for donations will likely increase in years to come. Additional information related to finances appears below in the updates related to our official journal.

## **SERVICE TO THE "COMMUNITY"**

In terms of the broader sense of community, the society in which we work and live, there are a number of developments to report. If competent clinical neuropsychologists were not allowed to employ flexible batteries when evaluating litigants, or if competent clinical neuropsychologists were not allowed to use testing assistants, it would be problematic for our members to be sure, but it is more broadly a problem for the communities in which we live. Related to the matter of choosing a flexible battery, the approach endorsed by a majority of clinical neuropsychologists, the AACN Board of Directors was asked to submit an Amicus brief to educate the New Hampshire Supreme Court, which had agreed to hear the appeal of a relevant

evidentiary ruling in the case of *Baxter v. Temple*. The resulting Amicus brief concerning the use of flexible batteries in our specialty was submitted to the state Supreme Court in July 2007, and is available on our website. Related to the ongoing matter of the New York state prohibition against use of testing assistants, the board has been supportive of the efforts of our New York members in the form of monetary support. In a separate development, the United States Labor Department is conducting research regarding occupations, which will result in a new compendium of occupational information to replace the former *Dictionary of Titles*. A representative of the Labor Department contacted AACN to solicit our assistance in contacting our members. The board agreed that it clearly serves the public interest to have accurate information regarding our specialty and who better to provide it than our own members. Finally, there has been much discussion in the media regarding head injuries among active duty military serving in war zones. In response to discussions on our own listserv that emanated from a position paper from the discipline of neurology, an inter-organizational Military TBI Task Force (AACN, APA Division 22, APA Division 40, National Academy of Neuropsychology) was created, which produced a clinical neuropsychology position paper on this important topic. The Task Force members (with AACN members in italics) were: *Michael McCrea*, (Chair), *Neil Pliskin*, *Jeffrey Barth*, David Cox, *Joseph Fink*, Louis French, *Thomas Hammeke*, David Hess, *Alan Hopewell*, *Daniel Orme*, Matthew Powell, Ron Ruff, *Barbara Schrock*, *Lori Terryberry-Spohr*, *Rodney Vanderploeg*, *Ruth Yoash-Gantz*. A copy of the report produced by the Task Force is available on our website.

In terms of the “community” of clinical neuropsychologists, AACN has also been quite active. For example, in Florida our members and other clinical neuropsychologists are frequently subjected to requests for court orders that their forensic evaluations be subjected to third party observations, including video taping. On multiple occasions, the AACN Board has signed on to multiple signature Amicus briefs organized in support of our members in Florida that were submitted to inform the courts of the negative aspects of such intrusion into our evaluation process. We have also provided funding to co-sponsor a summit on assessment of ethnic minorities, organized by Deborah Koltai-Attix and Jennifer Manly. On a much broader matter that affects clinical neuropsychology training, an Inter-organizational Summit on Education and Training Task Force (ISET) began meeting in 2007 to discuss the implications of the 1997 Houston Conference model and the possibility of holding a follow-up training conference (i.e., a “Houston II” conference). The Task Force members (with AACN members in italics) and the organizations represented are, in alphabetical order of last names are: *Jacobus Donders* – APPCN, *Anne Herring* – AITCN, Jim Hom – CCPN, *Catherine Mateer* – ADECN, William Perry – NAN, *M. Douglas Ris* – Division 40, Ronald Ruff – NAN, Bradley Sewick – ABPN, Paula Shear – Division 40, *Glenn Smith* – ABCN, *Jerry Sweet* – AACN. The majority of effort to date has gone to constructing a survey, which is intended to shed light on the integration and effectiveness of the Houston Conference training model into our field.

On a different front, but of equal interest and importance to our members and our specialty, health care payers have been inexorably marching toward a “pay for quality” approach for years. The handwriting is now on the wall that clinical practice must be supported by outcome data. Although we all have years of anecdotal experience of the positive impact we make with our referral sources and patients,

high-quality scientific data is what is really needed. Leslie Rosenstein and Ted Peck have organized a task force of AACN members, and along with Kira Armstrong have begun to formulate strategies and identify funding sources for conducting relevant neuropsychological outcome research. By now you will have been offered the opportunity to make a tax-deductible donation toward these activities. Please consider doing so.

It would be difficult to be a practicing clinical neuropsychologist and not notice how often colleagues discuss thorny forensic topics, in particular malingering. With so much (pun intended) *effort* and debate, it was decided to hold the first AACN Consensus Conference on "The Neuropsychological Assessment of Effort, Response Bias, and Malingering." This will occur at the Boston AACN annual meeting and workshops, with Robert Heilbrunner and myself as co-chairs. Altogether, 25 experts will contribute to what will also be presented as a work in progress at a consensus conference workshop on the Saturday morning of the meeting. This workshop component will allow for broader input and discussion. The resulting consensus conference paper based on the combined work of five working groups of five experts each will be published in our official journal.

Sub-specialization continues to be a topic for all of ABPP's specialties. Spurred on by recent discussions and the recent ABPP vote regarding the pediatric neuropsychology proposal that failed to win ABPP support, ABPP has asked all of its specialty boards to continue discussions on sub-specialization. Within Clinical Neuropsychology, Ida Sue Baron will chair a committee consisting of Kira Armstrong, Deborah Attix, Celiane Rey-Casserly, John Lucas, Brenda Spiegler, and Jerry Sweet, with ex-officio membership for Michael Westerveld, Kerry Hamsher, and Linas Bieliauskas. The committee will consider the issue broadly, including for geriatric, pediatric, and forensic sub-specialization, and make specific recommendations to the American Board of Clinical Neuropsychology.

## **SPECIFIC ONGOING PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES**

### **Annual Conference**

Our annual conference in Denver in June 2007 was once again a resounding success. Attendees hailed from 43 of the United States and four other countries, coming from as far away as Japan, Europe, and New Zealand. Greg Lamberty, with assistance from Ida Sue Baron and Robert Heilbrunner, organized a very high caliber program. Richard Kaplan once again organized the awarding of continuing education (CE) credits, which were awarded on site. Ida Sue Baron was given the Distinguished Neuropsychologist of the Year Award at the all-conference annual luncheon. The scientific poster session, organized by Mike McCrea, was high quality and again in 2007 grew substantially in size. The attendee ratings of the 22 continuing education workshops were consistently very high. As was the case last year, a major reason for the success of our annual meeting was due to conference coordinator Sandra Koffler. This year our annual conference and workshops will take place in Boston, June 19–21, at the Seaport Hotel. Aaron Nelson is this year's Local Site Committee Chair. The Board of Directors has been considering sites for future meetings, and has selected San Diego for June 2009 and Chicago for June 2010.

I want to be sure to acknowledge the key annual meeting work over the years by three individuals who have now turned over the reins for annual meeting responsibilities to others, after many years of tireless service. Greg Lamberty has passed the duties of Program Chair to Susan McPherson. Mike McCrea has passed the organizing of the scientific poster session to Gina Rehkemper and Pamela McMurray, and Richard Kaplan has turned over the annual meeting CE responsibilities to Mary-Ellen Meadows and John Crouch.

### **AACN/Oxford University Press Book Series**

Having begun officially at our Denver meeting, the collaborative book series partnership with Oxford produced its first three books in 2007. These were authored by workshop presenters and AACN members Shane Bush (*Ethical Decision Making in Clinical Neuropsychology*), Mike McCrea (*Mild Traumatic Brain Injury & Postconcussive Syndrome*), and Greg Lamberty (*Understanding Somatization in the Practice of Clinical Neuropsychology*). Oxford has been very pleased regarding the volume of early sales and the enthusiasm conveyed in feedback from individuals purchasing these initial books. Two more books are in preparation for 2008. The first is by Robb Mapou on learning disabilities and attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder in adults. The second book is likely to have perennial workshop relevance, as it relates to the annual workshops presented by Linas Bieliauskas and Diane Howieson on preparing for the ABCN examination. The authors of the latter book are our colleagues in BRAIN (Be Ready for ABPP in Clinical Neuropsychology), Kira Armstrong, Deane Beebe, Michael Kirkwood, and Robin Hilsabeck, who are preparing a workshop series book on a step-by-step approach to preparing for the ABCN examination.

At each subsequent annual meeting, some workshop presenters will work in advance with Oxford to create a small paperback text, the publication of which will coincide with the presentation of their workshop. The texts will be for sale during and after the meeting for those unable to attend the workshop or the meeting. In addition, Oxford University Press will market the books in their vast marketing network. Each volume in the series includes a CE component and access to a web version of the CE component on the AACN site (separate from the online CE program linked to *TCN*), as well as the workshop's archived slide presentation and, on occasion, enhancements such as additional photographs or illustrations. As part of the editorial board advising on book concepts for this series, I can tell you that a number of exciting workshops are expected to produce future books in the AACN/Oxford book series.

### **Practice Guidelines**

Robert Heilbronner, Practice Committee Chair, and members of a Practice Guidelines Subcommittee (Lidia Artiola i Fortuny, Erin Bigler, Kyle Brauer Boone, Richard F. Kaplan, Greg Lamberty, Neil H. Pliskin, Michael Schmidt, H. Gerry Taylor, Karen Wills) completed their work and the resulting document was published in *TCN* issue 2 in 2007. The practice guidelines are also available in downloadable PDF format on our website under "Papers/Policies/Research".

### **Website Use and Upgrading**

With the assumption that our website was an important source of information concerning our organization and our individual members, our board made a number of decisions. We decided to have our webmaster install new software that would allow us to identify how often and which pages of our website were being used. For example, we learned that in March 2007, there were 96,320 “hits” to our website and 10,156 separate visits. The most viewed page during this month was the first page of our member directory, which was viewed 19,220 times in one month. Fundamentally, this demonstrated that a second decision by the board, to allow members to add new content regarding clinical services and to link to an external member web page, was a sound one in that many contacts with our members could be facilitated via the AACN website. The board also decided to continue upgrading the appearance of our website, which by the time this article is in print should be finalized. (Readers will also have noticed that our AACN logo has been revised, as has been evident on the cover of recent issues of *TCN*.)

### **Developments of Our Official Journal**

Our publisher, Psychology Press, has continued to be very supportive of our journal and has also been very responsive to requests of the Co-Editors and of AACN. In 2007, *The Clinical Neuropsychologist (TCN)* was given a brand new look outside and inside, the number of issues per year increased from four to six, and the number of pages budgeted per annum increased, to well over 1000 for the first time. The page budget will exceed 1100 for 2008, and will continue to increase, in order to reduce publication lag of accepted articles, as indicated by demand. Despite this growth in the appearance and number of issues of the journal, AACN members and affiliates, who receive *TCN* as a benefit of membership, have *not* experienced a cost increase. Although we cannot expect to keep our same benefit subscription rate indefinitely, the growth of our journal without cost increases to date has been a real plus to AACN.

There have been numerous queries regarding the possibility of obtaining online access to *TCN* for AACN members and affiliates. This topic is a familiar one for most publishers, and represents a complex business decision that must balance an association's interests against the very substantial business interests represented by the desire to not undermine important sales of full online subscription access to libraries and institutions. I am pleased to report that as a result of discussions with Psychology Press, we have identified a solution that serves both sets of interests. Beginning in 2008, AACN members and affiliates will receive the traditional paper copy of the journal and also have access to the online version for the year in which dues have been paid. That is, in 2008, online access to the new issues of that year's volume as well as the new articles in the early online publication area of the journal's webpage (*iFirst*), will be available online to our members and affiliates.

Related to the electronic accessibility of *TCN*, which is very important to authors and editors, there are additional developments. First, the online *iFirst* publication that takes place at the Psychology Press website for *TCN* approximately two months after acceptance has now been in place for approximately one year.

The online version is complete, with the exception of the final printed page numbers, and is available to any individual or employee of an institution with online access. Importantly, this electronic version's title, author list, and abstract are completely searchable, which provides other clinical researchers an opportunity to know of important work well in advance of actual printing of paper copies. Second, data provided to Rus Bauer and me as co-editors indicate that Psychology Press has been very successful in increasing access to *TCN*. Not only have standard paper subscriptions increased in recent years, both to individuals and to libraries, but the number of electronic "views" of the online journal have skyrocketed. For example, the number of views of the *TCN* table of contents increased from 3,091 in 2004 to 19,012 in 2006. Similarly, the number of article page views increased from 9,714 in 2004 to 53,742 in 2006. Clearly, the important work of our *TCN* authors has been receiving much more attention as a result of our publisher's effective use of the World Wide Web. A concrete example of this occurred in June and July 2007 when *TCN* author Maria Jonsdottir's online pre-publication article was picked up by the popular press due to its relevance to the newly released Simpsons animated movie. Specifically, the article contained information on cognitive processing that seemed to shed light on Homer Simpson's "Doh" moments. Dr. Jonsdottir had not expected so much attention from her research on mental slips, which ultimately even included an interview with the BBC!

In 2007, AACN launched an online CE program tied to designated articles in our official journal, *The Clinical Neuropsychologist (TCN)*. Richard Kaplan spearheaded this project, which is now overseen by Andrew Colvin. A designation appears in the table of contents next to the title of each article and on the first page of each article selected for the CE program. Instructions are provided in the back of the issue regarding how to access the AACN website and in turn the questions that must be answered in order to obtain the CE credit. As is the case with the workshops at our annual conference, these credits are being provided under the auspices of the American Psychological Association CE program. These credits are available to all clinical neuropsychologists, whether AACN members or not, with the cost for non-members set higher than that for members and affiliates.

The new Grand Rounds section, exclusively devoted to presentations of individual cases, with Joel Morgan as Section Editor, has now been in place almost one year. Adult and child cases of interest will appear within this section as they are available. The content of case studies appropriate for this section includes: classical neuropsychological syndromes, unusual presentations of well-known disorders/syndromes, rarely seen disorders, and other cases of distinction.

## **SUMMARY OF THE STATE OF THE ACADEMY: SO, HOW ARE WE DOING?**

Although each AACN member and affiliate will have to answer the above question for herself/himself, my view once again this year is that our Academy is doing very well. This annual report is actually increasing in length each year, due to the fact that we are increasingly active, which to me is a key sign of a healthy organization.

As the last of the original board members who began serving when AACN was founded in 1996, I want to say what a privilege it has been to work on behalf of an

organization that is so internally cohesive and so extraordinarily focused on activities that are making a positive difference to the professional lives of our members and more broadly to our specialty and society. Having had the opportunity to participate in a number of professional organizations in what is currently a 29-year career (and counting), I can say with all sincerity that my involvement with AACN for the last 12 years has been by far the most satisfying among numerous past and present professional activities. Seeing so many new faces at our meetings, so many young colleagues becoming board certified and joining our membership, and even the youthful look of our board and committees, is unbelievably gratifying.

In closing, I particularly want to thank and acknowledge the current and past members of the AACN Board of Directors with whom I have served. These individuals have been unbelievably conscientious and have epitomized altruism and volunteerism. Clearly, AACN has a bright future. I look forward to seeing you in Boston in June!