

Clinical Neuropsychology; An Anachronism?

The symposium begins with a presentation on the state of neuropsychology; the rapid growth of the field over the last two decades, the burgeoning number of journals, the spawning training programs, and the large number of individuals who have joined neuropsychological associations. The chair will provide an overview of the current practice of consultative neuropsychology and outline the issues to be addressed in the symposium. The first presenter will provide an historical retracing of the reimbursement of neuropsychological services up through the specialty certification of the 1990s. A major focus of the presentation will be on the impact that changes in procedural codes, managed care strategies, and the current moves toward "capitation" will have on the practice of clinical neuropsychology. The second presentation will cover the impact of DOD health care management strategies on the delivery of mental health care and in particular the delivery of neuropsychological services. The presenter will describe efforts to create a clinician-controlled mental health care system as an alternative to contracting with a managed care company. In addition, the requirements for neuropsychologists to demonstrate their contribution to cost-containment and quality of care will be addressed. With the anticipated decline in consultative neuropsychology there is a question as to where job opportunities will be found. The third presenter will suggest that neuropsychology is likely to remain strong in five areas: academia, industry, commercial research, forensic practice, and rehabilitation. The few neuropsychologists who have the necessary credentials to work in these areas are likely to find themselves reasonably well remunerated. Changing trends in neuropsychology are expected to have an enormous impact on the training of neuropsychologists. The final presenter will survey the past and current training of neuropsychologists, and will discuss specific strategies that are consistent with present day health care issues and the market place. The discussant will comment on pertinent issues and provide recommendations for current and future neuropsychologists.

An Unstable Future for Neuropsychological Reimbursement

A brief historical retracing of the Current Procedural System and third party reimbursement will be provided beginning with the generic licensing laws of the 1960s and continuing with the specialty certification of the 1990s. The introduction of the consultative examination for neuropsychology (separate from psychological testing) will be outlined as will its evolution to its present status. Also, the introduction of neuropsychological rehabilitation reimbursement during the 1990s will be addressed. Specific focus will be on the current move towards capitation, with admittedly more focus on quantity than quality. Legal and ethical implications will be briefly considered. Speculation for neuropsychological reimbursement during the last part of the decade of the brain will be considered and long term growth possibilities (e.g., development of a "primary-care neuropsychology") will be presented.

Impact of DOD Health Care Changes on Neuropsychology

The presenter will speak on the rapidly changing face of mental health care delivery in the Department of Defense medical system. Particular attention will focus on the reorganization of mental health care delivery, including neuropsychological services in the National Capital Area. The reorganization, which effects over 300,000 beneficiaries and over 400 mental health care providers, represents a unique effort to create a clinician-controlled mental health care system as an alternative to contracting with a managed care company. The future of neuropsychology in the reorganized system will be addressed as well as requirements for neuropsychologists to demonstrate their contribution to cost-containment and quality of care.

The Neuropsychology Job Market - Future Opportunities

Career opportunities for neuropsychologists have dramatically changed over the last five years and are expected to change further in the coming five years. Consultative, private practice neuropsychology is probably a thing of the past. The presenter will discuss five areas in which neuropsychology is expected to remain strong. (1) In academia neuropsychologists are expected to continue to play an important role in teaching and research. Neuropsychologists will be needed to teach brain-behavior relationships to psychology undergraduates, and will also be needed to train clinical psychology students in the application of neuropsychological assessment methods. Researchers will continue to work on basic experimental and clinical research issues, paying particular attention to novel functional neuroimaging methods. Other researchers will focus on development of new testing methodologies, while others will study the neuropsychological deficits associated with medical and psychiatric conditions. (2) Assessment of employees recovering from neurological and psychiatric conditions known to interfere with cognitive functioning is the primary task in industrial settings. From industrie's perspective these evaluations are necessary to reduce liability. This is especially true in safety critical occupations such as pilots and nuclear power plant controllers. (3) The area of commercial research, such as consultation to pharmaceutical compaines, is likely to be an exciting area for neuropsychologists with a strong background in research methodology and statistics. (4) Forensic neuropsychology is expected to remain a strong area of practice. Neuropsychologists are the "experts" who are well equipped to objectively assess the extent and cause of neuropsychological deficits. (5) Rehabilitation neuropsychology is another area where neuropsychology is likely to survive. Unfortunately, in this area the competition is fierce between the different health care providers (social workers, speech therapists, and occupational therapists) for an ever shrinking health care dollar. Nevertheless, neuropsychologists have unique skills that simply don't exist in these other professions. Thus, these examples show that opportunities exist, and that the field of neuropsychology isn't going to disappear anytime soon.

Training of Neuropsychologists: Meeting the Needs of the Future Market

This talk will review the current status of neuropsychological training and will explore the necessary changes required to meet the training needs of the future. Two core issues will be discussed. The first addresses issues in the job market that effect neuropsychology training and the second content and system changes needed to prepare students for their future roles.

The first consideration stems from the discrepancy between the growing number of training positions in clinical neuropsychology and the shrinking number and changing demands of employment opportunities post training. Neuropsychology practicum students, interns and fellows are central and essential to many, if not most, neuropsychology services. In return for typically highly specialized and well supervised training, they provide valuable services at low costs. Nevertheless, the employment opportunities for these individuals are limited. Hence, the issue of training individuals for nonexistent jobs requires careful scrutiny despite the contribution to patient care and research trainees make during their tenure.

Secondly, there appears to be a gap between the demands of the changing job market and the structure and content of neuropsychology training. While a solid foundation in clinical neuropsychology will continue to be a prerequisite for future roles, specific preparation for these new roles must become a formal part of training. Future directions in training will be discussed in light of anticipated job opportunities and the modifications and additions to training that will be necessary to prepare students for these opportunities. Specific reference is made to the role modifications and anticipated future opportunities discussed by the previous presenters.