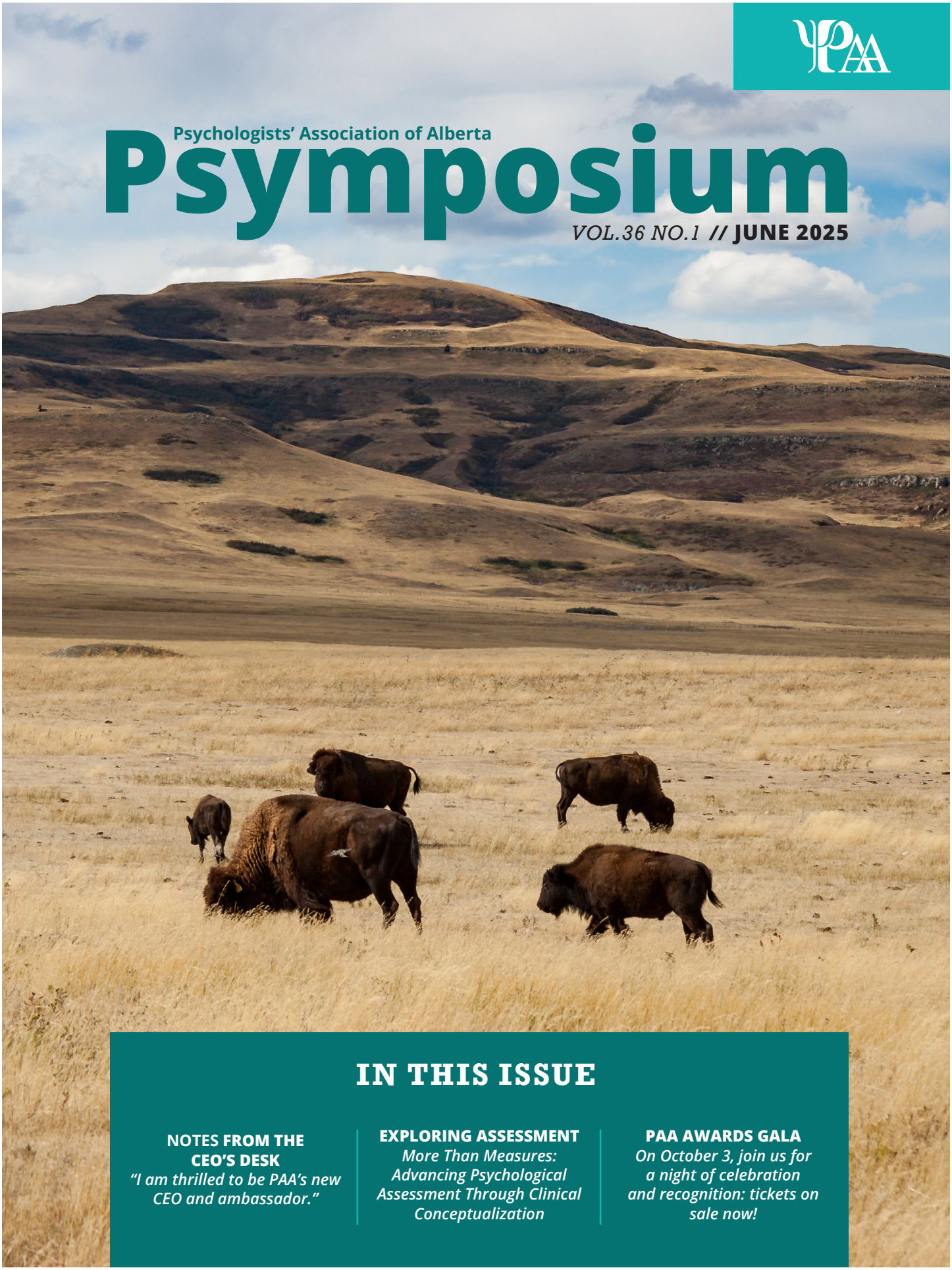
Psychologists' Association of Alberta

Psymposium

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EXPLORING ASSESSMENT
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PAA AWARDS GALA
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Mission and Vision

The mission of the PAA is to advance the science-based profession of psychology and to promote the well-being and potential of all Albertans. PAA and its members are recognized leaders in enhancing the psychological health of all Albertans.

Psymposium

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"All Albertans regardless of income should have access to psychological services."

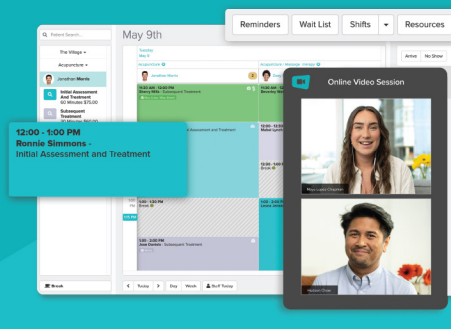
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EDITOR'S LETTER

By Michelle Vandegriend, Ph.D., R. Psych



"We can change the world and make it a better place. It is in your hands to make a difference."

"Time flies when you're having fun", and it has been a pleasure indeed to serve as the Editor-in Chief of Psymposium over the past decade. After much reflection over the past year, I have decided that it is time to move on and explore new opportunities so this will be my final publication.

I leave feeling much nostalgia and fond memories as I reflect back on the history of Psymposium and when I first began volunteering approximately twenty years ago. I started when I was in my undergraduate degree contributing to book reviews and then moved into the role of book review editor, back when we had a section in Psymposium dedicated to Book Reviews. As years passed it felt like a "natural" transition to volunteer for the role of Editor-in-Chief. I remember when we went from the bluish-green version to full-color and a new layout, additional topics/sections were integrated, online accessibility became the standard, a plethora of resources were unfolding within our pages, and our team expanded as well as our volunteer and advocacy efforts.

This role has been more than just Editor…It has been a platform for growth, connection, purpose, commitment and collaboration. It has been a privilege to work with talented and inspiring board members, contributors, and exceptional staff over the years in helping to advance psychological practice in our province through our publications. I am also very thankful to all our readers as you are the heartbeat of our work.

I am confident that Psymposium will continue to flourish, evolve, and be driven by a commitment to excellence.

Although this chapter as Editor-in-Chief is closing I look forward to new adventures in my dedication to the field of psychology and our profession.

Michelle
PAA Member and Psymposium Editor-In-Chief

Michelle Vandegriend, Ph.D., R. Psych.
Certified Gottman Therapist

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NOTES FROM THE CEO'S DESK



Heartfelt Greetings, PAA Members!

I am thrilled to be PAA's new CEO and ambassador.

By William E. Hanson, Ph.D., R.Psych

I'm excited to further champion psychology and the greater good. I have led, supervised, and advocated for psychologists my entire career. At this time, I happily take the baton from Dr. Judi Malone, who took PAA to new heights. I hope to do the same.

I write my very first "Notes from the CEO's Desk" with an open heart, mind, and enthusiastic anticipation of things to come.

Who Am I? I am a Registered Psychologist, former academic and process-outcome researcher, and former Acting Assistant Deputy Registrar at CAP. I'm a husband, father of three young boys, first-generation college/university graduate, and NCAA athlete. For fun, I write Op-Eds on sports analytics, children's books, and movie screenplays. I completed bachelor's and master's degrees in psychology, and an APA-accredited doctoral program (Arizona State University) and internship (Duke/Durham VA Medical Center). I also completed two clinical post-doctoral residencies. Clinically speaking, I specialize in Collaborative/ Therapeutic Assessment (C/TA), training and supervision, competency development, Measurement-Based Care (MBC), and practice standards and regulatory matters.

What's my role at PAA? Leading and managing a professional association is complex and a high-impact responsibility. PAA's CEO is, for example, responsible for understanding regulatory matters, governance and board relations, member engagement, ethics and professional guidance, strategic planning, financial sustainability, public accountability, and, of course, advocacy and upholding professional excellence. The CEO is also responsible for building strong, trusting relationships with others. Building relationships and communicating effectively are internalized values of mine. Fairness and equity are also internalized values. I live by the Indigenous (Plains First Nations) proverb, "Give me knowledge, so I may have kindness for all." Over the years, I developed an authentic big-picture leadership style, a questioning growth-oriented mindset, and an ability to see people for who they are. I work collaboratively with people and help them separate signals from noise. Separations of this sort come from breaking down complex research, CAP Standards, and legislation into coherent, easily understandable take-home points.

Where are we going? Psychologists are the mental health experts in Alberta. PAA and its members, therefore, have tremendous responsibility to society.

As PAA goes forward, I'm mindful of the mythical figure, Janus, the Roman overseer of beginnings, endings, and transitions. Janus looked in multiple directions simultaneously. Because mental health care is at a crossroads in Alberta, such dualities and perspectives are needed. Together, we can 'move the needle,' 'push the envelope,' and all other measurable actionable idioms. I, for one, have started thinking carefully and strategically about foreseeable regulatory changes and associated professional issues. As a result, my initial top ten PAA priorities include:

- Psychologists' health and personal well-being
- Professional identity: distinguishing psychologists from counsellors and psychotherapists
- Developing foundational competencies in the field: professionalism, interpersonal skills, and interdisciplinary sensibilities
- PAA's Continuing Education (CE) programming and perceived value to members
- Professional guidance and ethical/legal issues faced by our profession
- Recognizing exemplary professional practice in Alberta
- Creating additional communities of practice (e.g., Assessment & Diagnosis, MBC [see, for example, CAP's April 2025 issue of the Monitor])
- Modern technologies and artificial intelligence (AI)
- Clinical supervision: students and provisionals
- Publicly funded mental health care, stigma, and treatment accessibility

In closing, I encourage all PAA members to engage with the association and each other.

Engaging with professional associations and peers/colleagues enhances one's practice and protects psychologists from complaints. I also encourage members to engage with me regarding ideas for improvement and expanding PAA's influence and reach.

If we all move forward with open hearts and minds, good things will come.

William E. Hanson, Ph.D., R.Psych
PAA CEO

BOARD NOTES

By Dr. Quintina Bearchief-Adolpho, R. Psych
President, PAA Board of Directors



One guiding principle I strive to focus on is to listen, understand, and consider. I plan to continue incorporating this principle, especially regarding hearing your voice, our membership.

My name is Dr. Quintina Bearchief-Adolpho, Ph.D., and I am a member of the Siksika Nation. I was raised by my parents, Clement and Theresa Bearchief. I hold a Master's degree in Counselling and School Psychology, as well as a Ph.D. in Counselling Psychology. I have worked in this field for over 20 years, and I have served as a Councillor for the Siksika Nation's Chief and Council. I am currently the Mental Health Clinical Team Leader at Siksika Health Services. I have been married to Robert Kaanoiakapuuwai Adolpho for over 30 years, and we have six children, one of whom is married and has six children of her own. Our family represents a mix of cultures, including both Blackfoot and Hawaiian ancestry.

I am honoured to be elected as the first Indigenous President of PAA's Board of Directors. This is a testament to PAA's focus on incorporating the Calls to Action developed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and outlined in its report.

At the APA leadership training this past February I discovered that Alberta's PAA is well-known throughout North America for having the most members and supporting staff. I want to acknowledge all the great work Dr. Judi Malone and previous board members did to bring us to this point. I would also like to recognize all the PAA members for supporting our profession in this manner.

While the board felt a significant loss when Dr. Judi Malone chose to pursue a different path, we are excited that Dr. Bill Hanson was selected and has taken his place as PAA's new Chief Executive Officer. The board and I are confident that he brings a wealth of expertise, experience, and vision to the table. We look forward to seeing what this year has in store for our association.

At our last board meeting, we reviewed the progress of our board culture that we implemented a year ago:

1. **Listen, understand and truly consider each person's perspective.**
2. **Speak up and be willing to be accountable for your contribution to creating a brave culture.**
3. **Instead of feeling right we need to be accurate and factual.**
4. **Be brave enough to allow the truth to win out and your wisdom, knowledge and experience to grow, which includes being challenged.**
5. **Be willing to endure the discomfort of conflicts until we achieve mutual understanding.**

Based on the results, it seems these guiding principles have really helped our board become more cohesive. One guiding principle I strive to focus on is to listen, understand, and consider. I plan to continue incorporating this principle, especially regarding hearing your voice, our membership.

Dr. Q,
PAA Board President

Upcoming Annual General Meeting

SEPTEMBER 5, 2025

*Make the Most of Your Membership: Engaging with PAA's **Collaborate Platform***

Are you eager to connect with peers across the province? Join Collaborate, PAA's members-only communication platform.

From discussions and blogs to resources and events, Collaborate offers incredible ways to connect with the professional community. Looking for an expert in a specific field? Find a complete directory in Collaborate:

ACCESS THE PLATFORM

Join your PAA peers in a members-only online community for discussions, resources, blogs, events, member directory, and more.

> Join PAA's Collaborate Platform[1]

Have a question about Collaborate?
Contact our Member Engagement Officer, Arim Kim.

Explore the directory:
- The Expert Directory is an incredible resource to find professionals with specific specialties.
- Members can search by location, topic, or name.
- You can connect with professionals who can share their expertise and insights.

Showcase your expertise:
- Your *expert profile* highlights your specialties and lets other members reach you.
- A finished *expert profile* increases your visibility for networking.

Networking:
- Reach out to other members on for advice, insights, or to share resources.
- Building your connections strengthens the community and enables professionals to better serve their clients.

Participation:
Regularly contributing on Collaborate creates visibility in a vibrant community.

In The Event Of A Psychologist's Sudden Death, Someone Is Left to Pick Up the Pieces.

A colleague or friend should not be burdened with:

- Notifying clients of your death
- Responding to client requests—even years later
- Storing records and navigating administrative chaos
- Managing a years-long load of ethical and legal responsibilities

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Our Profession, Community and Assocation: At a Glance

2025 PAA BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE AWARD WINNERS

Each year, PAA sponsors a special award at both the Edmonton Regional Science Fair and the Calgary Youth Science Fair. Congratuation to this year's winners:

Edmonton Regional Science Fair, March 8-9, 2025



Winner:
"Preventing Tragedies, Transforming Outcomes: A Machine Learning Approach to Early Detection of Adolescent Opioid Risks"

by Cathy Rong and Jessie Song at Old Scona Academic School



Honourable mention:
"The Placebo Effect"

by Sophie Taki and Abigail Pak at Archbishop Joseph MacNeil School

Calgary Regional Science Fair, April 10-12, 2025

Winner:
"Two Cultures, One Brain: Who's Really in charge? An AI-Powered MRI Analysis into the Neurobiological Correlates of Acculturation and its Impact on Cognitive Flexibility, Moral Decision-Making, and Identity Formation"

by Natania Varghese at Queen Elizabeth High School

PSYCHOLOGY MONTH

PAA'S PSYCHOLOGY MONTH CAMPAIGN:

- **FIVE** social media posts directed at improving awareness.
- Over **10,000** video and post views.
- **2,911** post engagements including likes and shares.

Thank you to everyone that joined us to celebrate the value of psychology!

RENEWAL EARLY BIRD WINNERS

Thank you to all of our renewed and new members for 2025-2026.

Congratulations to our three early bird winners:

- Alisha Mann
- Chantel Walker
- Candace Scheuer



FAREWELL & THANK YOU!

Psychologists' Association of Alberta (PAA) Members, Board of Directors, and Staff,

As my time as Interim CEO comes to a close, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to each of you for your support, collaboration, and commitment over the past eight months. It has been an honour to work alongside such dedicated professionals who strive every day to support the mental health and wellbeing of all Albertans.

The work you do is essential and deeply impactful, and I leave this role with immense respect and admiration for the profession and for the people who lead it with such integrity.

PAA is a leader in North American Psychological Associations, and this is only made possible by the devotion and hard-work demonstrated from the "small but mighty" staff team – thank you for your professionalism and compassion! Again, to PAA members, the organization is only possible with your continued participation and support.

Finally, a heartfelt welcome to Dr. Bill Hanson. With your leadership, I look forward to watching PAA continue to flourish.

With sincere gratitude,

Lori Pratt
PAA Interim CEO (September 2024 to May 2025)

PSYCHOLOGY IN THE MEDIA

January to April, 2025

13 MEDIA PIECES

VIA

- CTV News Edmonton
- 880 CHED Radio
- 630 CHED Radio
- Global News
- Medicine Hat News
- The Lethbridge Herald

THANKS TO

- Dr. Ganz Ferrance
- Kim Knull
- Aimee Reimer
- Dr. Linda Hanock

ON TOPICS INCLUDING

- New Year's Resolutions
- Realistic goals
- The "Let Them" Theory
- Making time for play in your busy schedule
- Canadians' feelings about US politics and tariffs
- Intention
- Ethnicity
- Vulnerability

2 PRESENTATIONS

EVENT DETAILS

- **Dr. Harpreet Gill** at the *Mind Matters: Navigating Mental Health Challenges in Student Life panel at The Kings University*
- **Lauren Brennand and Carmen Gietz** at the *Holy Trinity Academy – Career Fair*

If you or a colleague are interviewed through any media outlet or if you have attended a career fair or public speaking engagement, please contact our office at paa@paa-ab.ca to so that we can include the information in our report.

PSYCHOLOGY COLLABORATION

Psychology Groups

- APA Board of Professional Affairs
- The Council of Professional Associations of Psychologists
- The American Psychological Association
- AHS Psychology Professional Practice Council

Health Groups

- The Alberta Pain Network
- APS Working Group on Chronic Pain
- Provincial Addiction and Mental Health Council
- Family Physicians Collaborative Network for Pain & Addiction

Provincial Advocacy Groups

- CMHA Alberta
- Alberta Workplace Wellness Network
- Alberta Women's Health Leadership Council
- Health Coalition of Alberta

Target Response Groups

- CMHA Rural Mental Health Project
- Edmonton/Calgary Community Mental Health Action Committees

Get involved with our vibrant professional community

Volunteer with our association!

As a valuable member of PAA, you play a key role in our professional community. And as one of our volunteers, you can directly contribute to PAA's mission and support the excellence within our profession.

Our volunteer opportunities are varied and rewarding. **Join our team of ongoing volunteers as we make a difference.**

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM





Balancing Professional Relationships and Ethical Responsibilities

By Dr. Harpreet Gill, R. Psych

Ethical dilemmas often emerge in the professional lives of psychologists, particularly when addressing colleagues' misconduct — whether minor or severe. Confronting a colleague's unethical behavior is arguably one of the most complex and demanding ethical responsibilities psychologists face.

Ethical codes mandate psychologists to act when witnessing unethical conduct. For instance:

- **Reporting Risk to Public Safety:** Psychologists are obligated to report colleagues to their regulatory body, the College, if they suspect the individual's emotional, physical, mental, or cognitive condition poses a risk to the public or constitutes unprofessional conduct. This includes violations outlined by the Health Professions Act, Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists, or Standards of Practice.
- **Reporting Severe Misconduct:** Psychologists must also report colleagues engaging in actions such as sexual misconduct or abuse, as well as practices like female genital mutilation, to the Complaints Director of the appropriate regulatory body in accordance with the law.

> *Gathering objective information, seeking assurances of change, and involving others in less vulnerable positions can be effective strategies.*

When misconduct arises from a lack of sensitivity, knowledge, or experience, psychologists may engage informally with the colleague to address minor harmful behaviors. Gathering objective information, seeking assurances of change, and involving others in less vulnerable positions can be effective strategies. All actions should prioritize privacy and confidentiality.

Challenges in Ethical Decision-making
Addressing unethical behavior is fraught with obstacles. Some of the challenges that members have brought forward when requesting consultation through PAA's Professional Guidance Program, related to a colleague's moral lapse are as follows:

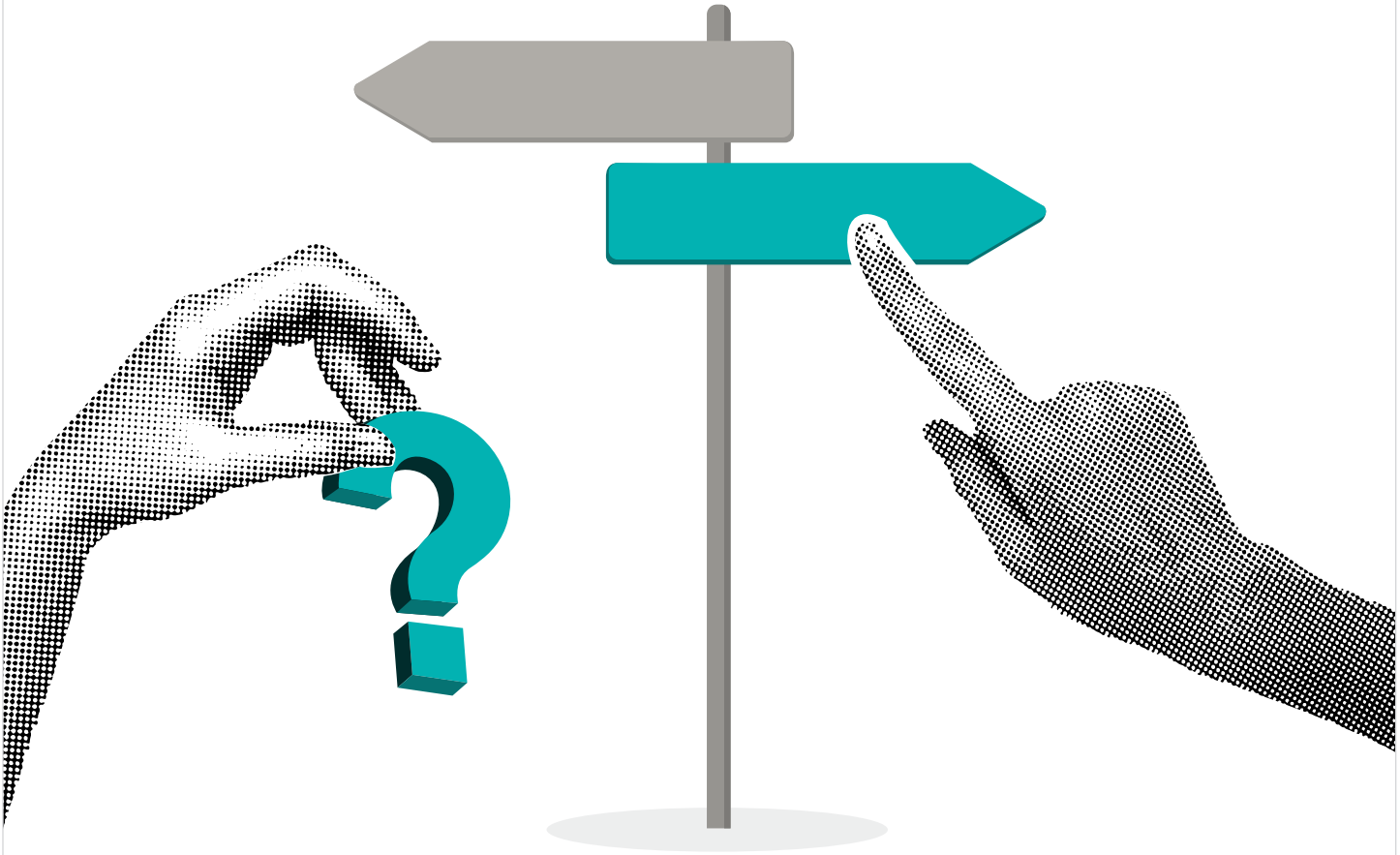
1. **Cultural attitudes:** Society often stigmatizes whistleblowing, perceiving it as "snitching," even when wrongdoing is evident.
2. **Relationship dynamics:** Ethical violations may involve a power imbalance, risking retaliation against the reporter.
3. Limited information: Psychologists may struggle to determine whether their knowledge suffices to justify reporting concerns, fearing reputational damage caused by premature accusations.
4. **Time and effort:** Handling ethical breaches can be resource-intensive, and filing formal complaints may appear simpler than collaborating for solutions.
5. **Lack of preparation:** Ethical concerns often evoke defensive reactions, yet many professionals lack the training to address such situations tactfully.

These challenges make ethical decision-making profoundly complex, particularly when action is both necessary and fraught with potential repercussions.

Upholding Standards Amid Complexity
Psychologists bear the responsibility of maintaining their profession's ethical standards, though this duty demands navigating nuanced situations. Reflecting on responses to ethical dilemmas can yield valuable insights, guiding improvements in future conduct. As ethics education becomes a growing focus, professionals must rigorously consider how to enact and uphold ethical standards in their daily practice.

By fostering dialogue and addressing ethical issues collaboratively, the psychology profession can strengthen its societal contract and maintain the trust and respect it has earned. This commitment not only ensures public safety, but it also reinforces the profession's integrity for generations to come.

Dr. Harpreet Gill is PAA's Director of Professional Affairs, a program that assists members and Alberta psychologists in learning about ethics and thinking through ethical dilemmas in their work and practice.



Have an ethical dilemma?

Our Professional Guidance Program is here to support you.

LEARN MORE

Consultations

Psychologists facing an ethical dilemma or clinical concern have the opportunity to discuss their concerns with the Director of Professional Affairs or a Practice Advisor and to access to a library of resources.

Webinars

Available through our Course Portal, the guidance program offers a range of webinars on diffferent ethical topics.

Lunch N Learn

PAA's Director of Professional Affairs, Dr. Harpreet Gill, can provide a tailored in-person presentation on ethical topics for your team or staff. Contact our guidance team to learn more: guidance@paa-ab.ca.

Psychology Unboxed

Listen to episodes of our professional guidance podcast for insights into common issues and considerations for psychologists in practice.



How Uncertainty Affects Racialized Patients and What They Can Do About It

By Dr. Gina Ko, R. Psych

At **Ko Psychology**[1], my Registered Provisional Psychologists and I see many racialized patients using a culturally responsive and socially just stance. Currently, the political climate south of the border is affecting our country. Many are having to live with uncertainty and anxiety.

I predominantly work with patients from a racialized background, and they have experienced heightened daily stress and overall burnout. Some have shared that their company has let go of departments and human resources due to cutbacks and perhaps a recession looming. Such patients already work twice as hard to be seen as competent and as leaders. They also experience burnout more profoundly due to having to mask and cover parts of their identity at work. Additionally, the threats made by the administration down south are already affecting their jobs. For example, they work within a system to decide if they should stock American goods and are in limbo. Some feel that they have little control and voice. There is also fear that they might not be heard or be ostracized if they speak their minds. Some have articulated that they feel more camaraderie in their personal and professional lives, as many believe in buying Canadian. Others have a hard time reconciling how their family and friends continue to support the leaders down south, saying that they are doing a great job with nationalism. They wonder how they could talk about politics at the dinner table, or do they not talk about it at all? Differing political views are tearing couples and families apart.

Deep division and polarization are becoming more common in this AI algorithm-generated world. Confirmation bias runs deeper, and people may stick to their initial beliefs even though evidence-based facts are searchable and at their fingertips.

With all this, patients tell me they may not be making as much progress in coping with mental health challenges. I often offer ideas such as the concentric circles of control. What do they have control of, could influence, and have no control over? They could do more for the things they could control, such as self-care, community care, and continuing with therapy. They could try to influence a family member if they think there is any way to talk about such challenging issues.

For things they do not have control over, such as how political leaders behave, I suggested acknowledging their frustration and not letting them live rent-free in their heads. Further, some may find it helpful that they may not be able to change other people's minds, and they can decide to respond in specific ways. Examples include not bringing up politics with certain individuals, taking a deep breath and walking away when conversations become too heated, supporting those who may need more support, using calling in, such as being curious by exploring deeper to generate mutual understanding across differences. Racialized patients appreciate small and specific ways of moving forward in an uncertain world.



Deep division and polarization are becoming more common in this AI algorithm-generated world. Confirmation bias runs deeper, and people may stick to their initial beliefs even though evidence-based facts are searchable and at their fingertips.

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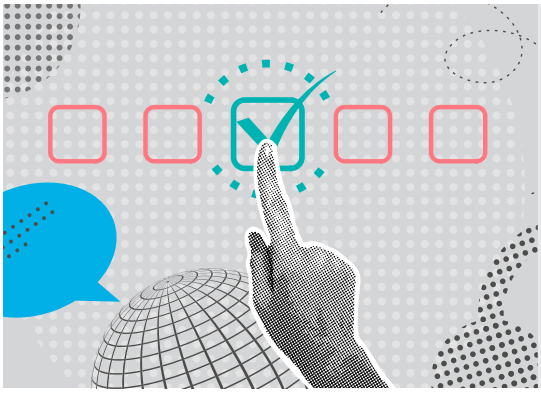
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Element by Westin: Calgary Airport location only
Four Points by Sheraton: Calgary Airport location only



What benefits are you looking for from PAA?

Help us identify potential membership benefits you would like to have access to through out association.

surveymonkey.link



Art vs. Science: The Great Debate

By Dr. Terry Singh, Ph.D., ABPP

We begin this month with a hearty 'thank you' to those readers who have taken time from their busy schedules to write in with their reactions and responses to the first few Walking the Line columns. Your support, enthusiasm, and even constructive criticism has all been most welcome. While I do try to make time to respond to as many readers as I can, do know that I have read, and appreciated, all of your responses.

This has long been the great debate within our field: Is psychology more of an art or a science?

Continuing with the topic of communication, regular followers of the PAA Collaborates Communities of Practice initiative will already be aware of a recent discussion between community members that was kicked off by a recent blog posting authored by T. Wilton Dale, a longtime psychologist and former PAA columnist. The topic of that post? The ongoing tension within our discipline between the 'art' and 'science' of clinical practice, and the author's contention that we have too-eagerly embraced the science-of-it-all at the expense of the art inherent to the practise of psychotherapy.

This has long been the great debate within our field: Is psychology more of an art or a science?

It is true that the consensus answer to this question tends to be some version of: A mixture of both. But since we do not wish for 'walking the line' to be viewed as a synonym of 'sitting on the fence', let us dig a bit deeper to uncover three important points that are infrequently considered by those engaged in this important and never-ending debate.

Point #1: It is essential that our terms are specific enough that they retain practical meaning. It can be argued that there is an 'art' to literally anything—including science—because mean that there is a creative element to our process. It can likewise be argued that there is a 'science' to literally anything—including art—because we are simply stating that there is considered method to our process. The true heart of the great debate lies not in art vs. science but instead with the more specific question of which elements of therapy practice ought to be valued, and to what degree?

Point #2: Another crucial aspect that is commonly overlooked in these debates is that psychology is not whatever you want it to be. The practice of psychology in Alberta has a specific history and course of development, and as regulated members we are all a part of this lineage. This does not mean that a psychologist cannot develop unorthodox or even iconoclastic ideas or practices, but it does mean that doing so involves breaking from existing conventions which are to be acknowledged. No psychologist is an island; discussions of where our discipline should be headed are naturally tied to where we are and how we got here.

Point #3: Psychologists have never, and will never, possess a monopoly on talking to other people. This is why there will always be other professions (and para-professions, and even pseudo-professions) who profess to engage in other forms of 'talk therapy'. What distinguishes psychology as a profession most starkly from these other schools of thought regarding various forms of talking cures is undoubtedly the body of scholarly work that has been developed by psychologists to inform the practice of psychology.

...Which is not to say that there are no clinical downsides to over-investment in methodological rigour. Indeed, even therapists practicing manualized treatments commonly struggle to adhere to delineated protocols. Intuitively, we seem to grasp that there is a 'becoming' that occurs in the therapeutic hour that needs to be acknowledged and responded to, and which cannot always be planned for in advance. After all, one need only to glance at the ongoing debates in our literature to find competing schools of thought across all corners of our discipline. And so, the great debate for the soul of our profession rages on...

Dr. Singh practises clinical and forensic psychology in Calgary, Alberta. The views reflected in Walking the Line *are his own.* ***For future column suggestions, he can be reached at drsingh@abfp.ca.***

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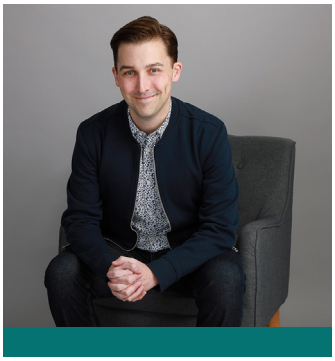
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More Than Measures: Advancing Psychological Assessment Through Clinical Conceptualization

By Dr. Mitch Colp, R.Psych

The term "psychological assessment" is often used interchangeably with "psychological testing," but this conflation reflects a deeper misunderstanding of what assessment truly entails. Assessment is not just about administering tests; it is about understanding people.

Many early-career psychologists pursue assessment to better understand their clients. Yet training often focuses narrowly on administering tools like the WAIS, WISC, or MMPI. While these instruments are valuable, they represent only one component. The more complex and essential skill is clinical conceptualization.

> ***Being skilled in testing does not equate to being skilled in assessment.***

To address this gap, we must better define what clinical conceptualization entails. Clinical conceptualization refers to the process of making sense of diverse clinical information to understand the nature, origins, and implications of a client's presenting concerns. It integrates data into a working model that informs intervention and guides ongoing care.

Unfortunately, it can also be challenging for trainees to find qualified supervisors who offer support in conducting integrated assessments. As a result, many complete coursework that focuses primarily on test administration without receiving mentorship in broader conceptualization. Without post-training guidance, narrow practices persist, reinforcing the false equivalence between testing and assessment.

Testing yields standardized data. Assessment involves synthesizing interviews, behavioral observations, contextual information, and developmental history to form a meaningful understanding of the client. Testing provides numbers; assessment provides insight.

Being skilled in testing does not equate to being skilled in assessment. Psychometrists are proficient in administering tests. However, they are not expected to interpret results or formulate diagnoses. True assessment demands clinical reasoning, knowledge of comorbidity, and the ability to integrate diverse sources of information into a coherent formulation.

Clinicians need tools to integrate interviews, rating scales, and contextual data to develop informed perspectives. This process constitutes assessment, even when formal testing is not involved.

Consider a student who scores low in reading comprehension. Testing might suggest a learning disorder. However, anxiety could be interfering with performance. English might be the student's second language. The student may not have had access to high-quality instruction. Without broader inquiry, the resulting formulation may be incomplete or misleading. The goal of assessment is not to assign labels based solely on scores. It is to interpret data in ways that guide care. Effective assessment synthesizes diverse information into conclusions that are clinically useful and personally relevant.

Practitioners with limited training may over-pathologize, overlook nuance, and risk causing harm. Inadequate assessment practices also raise ethical concerns, as misinterpretation can lead to inappropriate recommendations, unwarranted labeling, or missed supports - each of which may compromise a client's wellbeing and autonomy. This highlights the importance of education that emphasizes conceptual thinking alongside technical skills.

To advance the field, we must support training that fosters both competence in test procedures and the ability to construct meaningful, person-centered conceptualizations.

As our understanding of mental health grows more nuanced, so too must our assessment practices. It is time to elevate assessment from a procedural task to a reflective, collaborative, and contextually grounded endeavor. A thoughtful clinical conceptualization can change a life. A test score, when viewed in isolation, cannot.

Upcoming Professional Development Events



FEATURED EVENT

Ethical Practice & Financial Sustainability: Navigating the Intersection of Psychology and Business

This workshop focuses on how to manage ethical obligations when running a business, or just operating as a registered psychologist within Alberta (6 CE Credits).

Presented by Dr. Harpreet Gill and Dr. Jaleh Shahin

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Cybersecurity for Psychologists: Deconstructing Online Threats and Fortifying Your Cyber Defence

An esteemed cybersecurity expert and former police officer, provides a detailed exploration the pressing importance of cybersecurity for psychologists (1.5 CE Credits).

June 18 | Virtual
with expert Kathy Macdonald



Bridging the Divide between Clinical and Cultural- Indigenous Awareness Training

This workshop explores key concepts related to holistic health, intergenerational trauma, and decolonizing trauma through bridging the Indigenous perspectives and clinical models (4 CE Credits).

July 11 | Edmonton
with Leigh-Anne Sheldon, R.Psych



Evidence-Based Practice: What It Is & How To Do It

The workshop provides an overview and practical application of the concept of evidence-based practice (EBP) with opportunities for discussion of challenges and ways of incorporating evidence-based principles (6 CE Credits).

August 15 | Virtual
with Dr. Cody Guy House



Breaking the OCD Cycle: The Power of Exposure and Response Prevention

ERP is significantly underutilized by mental health practitioners. This workshop provides an overview of family-based ERP treatment planning for OCD and anxiety issues (6 CE Credits).

November 3 | Calgary
with Janet Caryk, R. Psych

Available through the PAA Course Portal

Foundations of Psychological Assessment

In this self-study course, students will learn a strong foundational knowledge in the field of psychological assessment.

40 CE Credits

Clinical Supervision - Level 1: Foundational Knowledge V.2

In this asynchronous self-study course, clinical supervisors will learn the foundational knowledge required for competent supervisory practice.

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Testifying In Court as a Psychologist

Designed to help psychologists better understand the different ways/means that they might be called as a witness for court or some other legal proceeding.

1 CE Credit

Understanding Neurodiversity in the Context of Therapy

Part one of the Beyond Series: Is "therapeutic resistance" a recurring theme in your work with neurodiverse clients?

1.5 CE Credits



Farewell Reflections

By Gwen Randall-Young, R. Psych

As I look back over thirty-five years as a psychologist, a warmth fills my heart. I feel blessed to have been a part of so many journeys. I value the trust given to me, as people shared their most intimate thoughts, joys, sorrows, and fears.

At first, I thought I had to "fix" everyone. Quickly, I realized that was not it. It was more about walking beside them, listening deeply, and supporting them through what they were experiencing, be it in the present or far-away past.

I came to see that each one had their own language or way of talking about their lives, and everyone had their own way of interpreting both their inner and outer worlds.

It was for me to meet them where they were, showing understanding, respect and compassion. That, in itself, is healing: particularly for those who did not have that in their lives. It was also about being non-judgmental, even in my own quiet thoughts.

It was also for me about lifelong learning. I continuously researched everything about each client's condition. The internet makes it so easy to keep current and explore a variety of ideas. One cannot rest on what was learned earning their degree. First, we cannot have studied everything, nor can we remember all the important aspects of the things we learned then. Also, the world is constantly evolving, people change, ideas and knowledge change, as does technology.

I loved my clients. I did not verbalize that, but early on I learned that the best way for me to help was to come from a place of loving kindness. I thought of each one as being on their soul's journey.

Although there is no scientific evidence of the existence of soul, I have always honored that part of every client. After all, the word psychology derives from the Greek word psyche, for spirit or soul.

I believe everyone has a pure soul, but the machinations of ego prevent one from tuning in to that still, quiet place, that allows for wisdom.

As I look back over thirty-five years as a psychologist, a warmth fills my heart. I feel blessed to have been a part of so many journeys. I value the trust given to me, as people shared their most intimate thoughts, joys, sorrows, and fears.

Long before becoming a therapist, I had written:

"I am Dancing Soul, and I will assist you to untie the knots that bind you so tightly to all that is not right for you. I will free your arms and legs so that you can fly, and I will sing with you until you have found your own song. And should you fall back to Earth I will circle the sky above you and my song shall be a beacon for your soul, beckoning you upwards, for I love you and see your essence."

This was not about clients, but rather was whisperings of my own soul. Thirty some years after writing this, I look back and it still reflects something I cannot say in other words and was central to my work.

While psychology is a science, I believe therapy is an art.

It has been a joy to write this column for Psymposium over the past decades. Thanks to the readers and the staff who put the magazine together so beautifully!

I wish every one of you the very best!



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