



AGM 2015

President's Report

The board of the Manitoba Psychological Society continues its work to advocate for increased access to psychologists for the public and directly for the profession of psychology. In preparation for our strategic planning session in September, we surveyed our members and asked each board member to complete a self-analysis of individual portfolios. Based on this information, we developed three initiatives for the board to pursue in 2014-2015.

Strategic Plan

We continue to hear from our members, the public, professionals, and key stakeholders that the role of psychologists is unclear. Psychologists are often grouped with therapists, counselors, and mental health clinicians who provide 'talk therapy' or classified as 'shrinks' and likened to psychiatrists. It is the responsibility of every psychologist and psychology student to clarify the uniqueness of psychologists. That being said, will every psychologist provide the same description? This issue is complicated by the fact that the regulations for registration are not consistent across the country or even within specialties of psychology. Most people's image of a psychologist is one who does clinical work. However, graduates from psychology programs could work in academia, business, or within community organizations (i.e., police, CFS, etc.). Because of the reported poor understanding of psychologists, the board has been and will continue to **increase the media and public presence of psychologists** by sending out Press Releases each month on various topics, writing Letters to the Editor, responding to psychologically relevant news events, and planning Psychology Month activities. Dr. Jeff Harvey, the Public Education Coordinator and member of the Communications Committee, summarizes activities to support this initiative since September 2014.

It will be no surprise that the board continues to advocate for increasing access to psychologists for the public. Various models have been recommended by a group of health economists that developed a business case for increasing access to psychological services. This report was commissioned by the Canadian Psychological Association in 2013

(http://www.cpa.ca/docs/File/Position/An_Imperative_for_Change.pdf). **The board decided that advocating for the provincial government to cover 10 sessions with a psychologist per family per year** could be a starting point for dialogue. Currently, we are reviewing this 'ask' in light of the identified needs of the public and the government. Given that the government has been focusing on child and adolescent mental health and prevention strategies, this initial message might be modified to funding child, adolescents, and families with specific challenges. This message is not intended to shadow the need for services to adults and seniors, but rather to function as a springboard for meetings with government and other key stakeholders. During these discussions, we need to be prepared to help the government 'solve' its challenges in meeting the needs of Manitobans. Over the next year and in preparation for the 2015 federal and 2016 provincial elections, MPS will put together a cohesive document accompanied with relevant statistics to advocate to the current government and all political candidates for increased access to psychologists.

Even though the advocacy road can be long, uphill, and rocky, there have been lovely scenic moments where we see victories across the horizon. As you might recall, Dr. Jon Gerrard and Ms. Rana Bokhari of the Manitoba Liberal Party made a public commitment to increase access to mental health services that could include funding psychologists under Medicare and providing financial support to hire and retain more psychologists in the province. Critical priority areas identified by the party include services for children, pregnant women, and individuals with depression and PTSD, and rural and remote communities. On November 19, I was invited to participate in a Press Conference with the Liberal Party to make this announcement at the Legislative Building. Dr. Moira Somers, Director for the Business of Practice for MPS, was also in attendance to network with the media. Despite the Liberal Party's limited representation in the Manitoba Legislature, in 2014, Dr. Gerrard has twice advocated for psychologists during Question Period. We are hopeful that the other parties are hearing the message and would consider making access to psychologists a part of political platforms and MPS will be ready to support them by providing the required data during campaign season.

The third priority identified during strategic planning was to **review and improve benefits to our members**. Members are already receiving discounts to workshops, emails regarding workshops by other organizations, employment opportunities, and other relevant information, and an improved insurance program with BMS Insurance. The board would like to continue increasing benefits offered to members and we hope that a number of the ideas will come to fruition in this upcoming year.

Outreach

In addition to the standard functions of the association, MPS has focused its efforts in support of the strategic plan. We recognize that advocacy for 'psychologists by psychologists' can appear to be self-serving, even when the focus of our message is on the wellbeing of all Manitobans. An advocacy message is much more powerful when endorsed by consumers of services or by other disciplines. To facilitate collegiality, MPS has participated in networking opportunities by attending events hosted by organizations and scheduling meetings with Presidents and Executive Directors of other associations. I was very pleased to have been invited to a Town Hall meeting of the Manitoba Pediatrics Society to discuss issues related to accessing psychologists for children, adolescents and families. Other psychologists who presented at the Town Hall included Dr. Jane Bow (Department of Clinical Health Psychology), Dr. Jennifer Frain (Executive Director, New Directions), and Dr. Lawrence Ellerby (Forensic Psychological Services). By the end of the meeting, the Manitoba Pediatrics Society expressed interest in working with MPS to advocate for increasing access to psychologists for their patients. In addition to following up with this association, we are also in the process of setting up meetings with the College of Family Physicians and the Winnipeg Fire and Paramedic Service, the latter of which contacted us to inquire about ways to access psychologists to treat their members for more complex issues (e.g., PTSD).

MPS recognizes the importance and power of voice by peer support organizations. Dr. Rehman Abdulrehman is representing MPS on the Manitoba Mental Health Alliance and is joined by various peer support associations, such as the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), the Anxiety Disorders Association of Manitoba (ADAM), the Schizophrenia Association, and the Mood Disorders Association. This group is intending to advocate for increased mental health services in general, and have made a commitment to advocate for increasing access to psychologists, specifically. Once we develop a list of our 'champions' (i.e., fraternal organizations, peer support associations) and a concise message for increasing access to psychologists with possible solutions, MPS will be organizing a Lobby Day at the Manitoba Legislature.

Representation on National Associations

Organizations working in silos have limited effectiveness. Opportunities to discuss successes and challenges with other associations are invaluable. I am grateful to have been elected Chair of the Council of Professional Associations of Psychologists (CPAP) and the Practice Directorate (Canadian Psychological Association (CPA)) for a second term. In these roles, I also sit on the board of CPA, on the Professional Affairs Committee (CPA), and on the Professional Liability Insurance Steering Committee. The contacts and resources that I have gathered from these groups have been stellar and support the MPS Board to function more efficiently.

As you know, CPAP (i.e., whose members include all the provincial/territorial fraternal associations of psychologists) and CPA are the sponsors of the BMS Insurance Program. We are pleased to announce

that we have had a successful year and that along with our insurance broker, BMS, look forward to providing all insured members with high quality benefits in the insurance program, ease with online or telephone renewal, and continued improvements to the program that will be communicated to all members in the next couple months.

The Practice Directorate is comprised of CPAP members, though it falls under the umbrella of CPA, and we have staff dedicated to supporting advocacy at the jurisdictional level. We contracted a company to provide us with a report on extended health benefits for psychological services and future trends in models of private insurers in December 2014. The results of this study showed that there is limited publically available information about the provision and availability of private health care benefits in Canada. Also, there is no provincial or federal government oversight or regulation. Based on the data collected, the findings confirmed that the industry is generally focused on cost management as opposed to health improvement. As such, the opportunities are limited for health professionals to initiate dialogue or drive change with insurance companies regarding increases to the extended health benefits packages for plan members.

Given the results of this report, an advocacy toolkit is being developed to support any association that is interested in meeting with the employers in each jurisdiction. The aim of this project is to educate the employers about cost-savings associated with timely and appropriate coverage for access to psychological services for their employees. Related to this project is the issue that many insurance companies require a physician's referral to see a psychologist in the private sector. Letters are being prepared to advocate for the removal of this gatekeeper requirement. These letters will be sent to insurance providers and relevant government ministries (e.g., Health, Mental Health and Addictions).

Acknowledgements

The MPS board is comprised of volunteer members who are dedicated to the mental and behavioral health needs of Manitobans and to the support of psychologists in our province. I would like to thank the entire board for their efforts in promoting psychology. Dr. Lesley Ritchie has invited interesting speakers for the fall and spring institutes and the hot breakfasts and delicious lunches at the workshops have been a hit. Joining our webmaster, Mr. Mohktar Joundi, Dr. Lisa Thouas and Ms. Julie Erickson are participating in a newly formed website committee to make the site easy to navigate and more dynamic for visitors. Julie has also assisted in AGM preparation and Lisa has been involved with Psychology Month and public education campaigns.

Though new to the board, Dr. Jeff Harvey has organized Psychology Month activities, served as a media liaison, and continues to organize public presentations for 'Psychology Year.' Dr. Moira Somers will be leading the charge to advocate with employers about the importance of increasing coverage for psychologists in extended health benefits packages. Dr. Alicia Ordonez recognizes the necessity of identifying mental health needs of various populations and she has proposed a needs-based assessment for the deaf, immigrants, and Aboriginal populations. Her employment with New Directions makes her well placed to do such important work. Dr. Jason Ediger and Dr. JoAnn Unger continue to provide continues to provide valuable input and ideas at our board meetings. As our

secretary, Dr. Pam Holens keeps us on track and accountable of our responsibilities and tasks. It is no surprise that Dr. Len Greenwood continues to be a Jack-of-all-trades by his involvement in developing the Ethics Resource Service and by servicing as the interim treasurer until Dr. Leanne Mak returns from maternity leave in May.

During his presidency, Dr. Rehman Abdulrehman developed integral relationships with peer support organizations and he continues to represent MPS with many key stakeholders. He was also integral in promoting the Mind Your Mental Health campaign by encouraging various groups and local celebrities to tweet a selfie wearing a t-shirt with the slogan, "Canadian psychologists Mind your Mental Health." The transition to my presidential term has been smooth following his leadership. A special thank you must go out to Ms. Heidi Tucker (Administrative Assistant), Mr. Mohktar Joundi (Webmaster), and Ms. Liisa Burgas (Bookkeeper), all of whom have contributed to the functioning of the association. At only 7 hours/week, Dr. Teresa Sztaba has been a powerhouse of efficiency and productivity for MPS. She is a wonderful representative of the society, as well as an excellent discussant of issues to improve Manitoba psychology.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all members of MPS for your dedication to the profession and to the wellbeing of Manitobans. I encourage you to contact MPS should you have any suggestions regarding our initiatives or if you would be interested in volunteering your time with the Society.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Andrea Piotrowski, Ph.D., C. Psych.
MPS President