

## **The Future of Psychology in Medical Specialties: Introduction to the Special Issue**

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*The continuing evolution of the health care delivery system in the United States presents threats and opportunities to psychologists in medical settings. This special issue explores the future of psychology in psychiatry, family medicine, rehabilitation, geriatric medicine, and pediatric medicine. The challenges facing neuropsychology and pain management are explored also. Finally, the professional issues of ethics in managed care, psychology in the public sector, and training future psychologists are addressed. Each paper summarizes concerns and provides recommendations for clinical practice, research, and training.*

**KEY WORDS:** health care; health psychology; medical specialties; training; research; practice.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Health care in the United States is undergoing rapid and dynamic changes due to multiple forces including: an increasingly unsustainable percentage of the gross domestic product attributable to health care; approximately 40 million under- and uninsured Americans; consumer dissatisfaction; and excessive workforces for medicine, nursing, and psychology. These forces and the subsequent changes in health care have profound implications for psychologists in medical settings.

Many of the changes in health care are threatening our profession. Layoffs, "restructuring," "product line development," and multiskilling have all contributed to a poorer quality of work life for psychologists in medicine. The changes in health care are also forcing psychologists to seek out new

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opportunities to establish more securely and to enhance psychology in medical settings. We asked the contributors to this special issue on "The Future of Psychology in Medical Specialties" to assess the current status of psychology in medical specialties and explore opportunities for growth.

The papers are presented in three sections. The first section addresses psychology in the specific medical specialties of psychiatry, family and community medicine, rehabilitation, geriatric medicine, and pediatric medicine. The second section includes articles on the specialty psychology services of pain management and neuropsychology. The third section addresses pressing professional issues facing psychologists in medical settings, including ethical issues in managed care, innovations in Medicaid health service delivery, and training the next generation of psychologists.

Psychiatry was among the first of the medical specialties for psychologists to gain entrance. But, as with many close partnerships, the relationship has been shaped by a common purpose as well as hostilities. Therefore, the special issue begins with an untempered evaluation of psychology in departments of psychiatry. **John Carr** and **Andrew Benjamin** provide an insightful description of how psychology can proactively shape its own future instead of acquiescing to psychiatry's longstanding paternalistic hold. **Edward Callahan** then describes the well-integrated relationship between psychology and family and community medicine. New models of service delivery and the roles of consumers are described by **William Stiers** and **Donald Kewman** in their paper on psychology in medical rehabilitation. Opportunities to provide psychological services to pediatric populations are reviewed by **Dennis Harper** in his article on pediatric psychology. The other end-of-the-age continuum is reflected upon by **Blake Andersen** and **William Haley** in their paper on geriatric psychology.

Psychology has been a leader in the fields of acute and chronic pain and the future appears fruitful, but the forces of health care reform are adding risks for psychology's future success. **Roger Fillingim** brings his unique experiences in private market pain management and academia to recommend enhancements in outcomes research, training, and education and advocacy efforts. **Brick Johnstone**, **David Coppel**, and **Brenda Townes** review neuropsychology's position among many medical specialties and discuss the importance of adapting services and seeking out new opportunities in practice and research.

**Katherine Hanson** and **Kathleen Sheridan** describe the numerous and potentially egregious ethical pitfalls associated with managed care and similar forms of health care delivery. Psychology is facing increasingly complicated ethical issues associated with enhancing the welfare of consumers while struggling to survive in many contexts. Their insightful paper furthers a needed dialogue within the profession. **Kristofer Hagglund**, **Mary Nack**,

and **Robert Frank** describe current changes in Medicaid, especially as they relate to people with disabilities, and they recommend revisions in practice, research, professional activities, and training. **Timothy Elliott** and **Joshua Klapow** discuss problems in preparing students to prosper in a health care world that will be much different from its current form. They offer a training model that may withstand the rigors of change.

This special issue is offered to stimulate thought and dialogue about the future of psychology in medical specialties. Prophesying is difficult, but sticking one's head in the sand is dangerous. We hope that the papers presented will stir psychologists' professional passions and elicit action to ensure that psychology has a substantive, meaningful role in medical specialties in the future. We sincerely thank the Editor, Dr. Ronald Rozensky, for his guidance and enthusiasm for this special issue.