



AMERICAN  
PSYCHOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION

## COMMITTEE ON AGING 2007 ANNUAL REPORT

### MEMBERS

The six members of the Committee on Aging (CONA) in 2007 were Rosemary Blieszner, PhD (Chair); Merla Arnold, RN, PhD; Florence Denmark, PhD; Peter Lichtenberg, PhD, ABPP; Victor Molinari, PhD, ABPP; and Michael Smyer, PhD.

### MEETINGS

The Committee on Aging held two meetings in 2007, in conjunction with the APA Consolidated Meetings, on March 23<sup>rd</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> and September 28<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup>.

### ACTIVITIES

CONA activities in 2007 addressed each of the goals in its Mission Statement: There shall be a Committee on Aging that shall concern itself with furthering the major purpose of APA to advance psychology as a science and profession and as a means of promoting health and human welfare by ensuring that older adults, especially the growing numbers of older women and minorities, receive the attention of the association. Specifically, the Committee will pursue the following goals:

**Science:** Provide strong and visible advocacy for a scientific agenda on aging to policy makers and private and public funding agencies.

1. CONA developed a 2008 Convention symposium on aging for President-elect Kazdin's Grand Challenges Presidential Initiative that focuses on the significant challenges facing society that psychological science can address. The focus will be on dementia and mental health, with presenters addressing the medical, clinical psychology, and legal aspects of some emerging issues in this area of gerontology, highlighting the implications of these issues for psychological science.
2. CONA provided comments that were incorporated into the APA formal response on the National Institute on Mental Health Strategic Plan, which stated that "the draft says little about aging populations, despite the unique diagnostic, treatment, and service delivery issues that arise for older adults (who often have multiple health problems). The development of culturally appropriate and personalized interventions requires that research be directed to topics surrounding aging."
3. CONA provided comments that were incorporated into the APA formal response to the National Institute on Aging on *Living Long and Well in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – Strategic Directions for Research on Aging*. CONA's comments stated: "There is minimal discussion or explicit acknowledgment of the impact of psychological processes on the health, longevity, and well being of our nation's older adults...The document fails to acknowledge the important psychological underpinnings associated with behavior (social and otherwise) and

cognition (mental status)...There was no discussion of the psychological or psychiatric conditions of aging per se.”

4. CONA met with Patricia Kobor, Senior Science Policy Analyst, Science Government Relations Office, at both of its 2007 meetings to discuss current aging science policy issues.
5. Dr. George Rebok represented CONA and geropsychology at the NIH Center for Scientific Review Behavioral and Social Science Workshop on April 25<sup>th</sup>.
6. CONA chair-elect, Peter Lichtenberg, PhD, ABPP, is a member of the APA/ABA Assessment of Capacity in Older Adults Project Working Group. The Working Group is currently developing *Assessment of Older Adults with Diminished Capacity: A Handbook for Psychologists*. It will be the third in a series that includes handbooks for lawyers (2005) and judges (2006). All are available at: <http://www.apa.org/pi/aging/>.

**Practice:** Promote the practice of psychology by advocating policies that enhance the availability and reimbursement of health and mental health services to older adults and their families.

1. CONA chair-elect, Peter Lichtenberg, PhD, ABPP, is a member of Dr. Sharon Stephens Brehm’s Presidential Task Force on Integrative Healthcare for an Aging Population (IHAP). The remaining members of CONA serve on its Advisory Panel. Its report, *Blueprint for Change: Achieving Integrated Health Care for an Aging Population*, informs psychologists about how to enter and function within an integrated team of health care professionals to ensure appropriate and effective health care for older adults.
2. CONA developed a request for Board of Discretionary Funds for the printing and dissemination of fact sheets on integrated health care for older adults targeting three audiences: older adult consumers and their families, policy makers, and graduate psychology faculty and training directors.
3. CONA met with Dr. Robert Roca, Chair of the American Psychiatric Association Council on Aging, at its September meeting in order to establish a collaborative relationship between the two organizations’ “aging” entities
4. CONA met with Diane Pedulla, JD, Director of Federal Regulatory Affairs in the Practice Directorate. She provided CONA with an update on key Medicare issues and other current efforts.
5. The theme and discussion of the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual CONA Conversation Hour held at the APA Convention was Integrated Health Care for an Aging Population: Moving from Report to Real World.
6. The Committee on Aging coordinated submission of a joint symposium for the 2008 convention with the Committee on Disability Issues in Psychology, Committee on Ethnic Minority Affairs, and Ad Hoc Committee on Psychology and AIDS titled: *Best Practices of Integrated Care: Opportunities and Challenges*.
7. CONA nominated geropsychologists to serve on the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality Stakeholder Group to support the work of the Effective Health Care Program that develops evidence on the effectiveness and comparative effectiveness of different treatments and health care interventions of importance to the Medicare, Medicaid, and State Child Health Insurance.
8. CONA met with Jessica Kohout, PhD, Director, APA Center for Psychology Workforce Analysis and Research. CONA expressed support for the establishment of the Office and discussed the importance of considering geropsychologists as projects are generated on workforce data needs. It was noted that lack of data on the number of psychologists working with older adults who were formally or informally trained in geropsychology, and who are members and non-members of APA, has put us at a severe disadvantage in terms of lobbying efforts for more geropsychology training programs at federal, regional, state, and local levels.

**Policy:** Contribute to the formulation and support of public policies and associated regulations that promote optimal development of older adults, facilitate psychological practice with older persons, and expand scientific understanding of adult development and aging.

1. CONA maintained ongoing communication with and provided input throughout the year to Diane Elmore, PhD, Senior Policy Advisor, Public Interest Government Relations Office.
2. In May, CONA chair-elect, Peter Lichtenberg, PhD, ABPP, was a presenter at the Public Interest Government Relations Office sponsored Congressional briefing for Older Americans' Mental Health Week. Cosponsored by APA, the Older Women's League, and the National Coalition on Mental Health and Aging, it was entitled, "Promoting the Mental Health of Older Adults: An Action Agenda for an Aging America."
3. CONA and the geropsychology community have worked for the past four years to support the efforts of the Public Interest Government Relations Office to advocate for enacting the Positive Aging Act. In 2006, the Older Americans Act was amended to include Title I of the Positive Aging Act and reauthorized immediately after CONA's Congressional visits. CONA is currently supporting efforts to enact Title II of the Positive Aging Act (S. 982/H.R. 1669) as part of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration reauthorization. This would support integration of mental health services into primary care and community settings where older adults reside and receive services.

**Education:** Promote inclusion of knowledge about adult development and aging in all levels of education, including continuing education, training programs, and professional development of psychologists.

1. CONA initiated its *Priming the Geropsychology Pipeline Project* to expose more students to the psychological dimensions of aging and the multiple opportunities to gain exposure to the rich variety of older adults in our society. CONA continues to work with the Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools (TOPPS) and the Psychology Teachers in Community Colleges (PT@CC) to provide new resource materials and modify existing curricula on geropsychology topics and career opportunities.
2. CONA submitted a letter to the Institute of Medicine (IOM) Committee on the Future Health Care Workforce for Older Americans to urge the Committee to specifically address professional workforce needs related to mental health and to consider the inclusion of a geropsychologist on the Committee.
3. CONA met with James W. Lichtenberg, PhD, Chair, Committee on Accreditation, and Susan Zlotlow, PhD, Director, Office on Accreditation, to express its long-standing interest in the incorporation of aging-related material in the accreditation process as one mechanism to ensure more exposure to the subfield of geropsychology. This exposure is felt to be critical for *all* psychology students, not just those planning a career in geropsychology, as most psychologists will work with older adults at some point in their careers. CONA believes that allowing individual programs to have the option of deciding at what age to end the teaching of developmental psychology is a misrepresentation of the scientific discipline, and that aging is often not a salient issue in discussions of diversity.
4. CONA meet with Nina Levitt, EdD, Director of the APA Education Policy Office, to discuss the need for the reinstatement of funding of the Graduate Geropsychology Education Program.
5. CONA successfully nominated two geropsychologists to serve on the Expert Reviewer Advisory Panel for the National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula.
6. An all-day continuing education program, *What Psychologists Should Know about Working with Older Adults* is being planned for generalist psychologists at the 2008 Convention.

**Public Interest:** Promote the application of psychological knowledge to the well being of older people, with special attention to the influences of gender, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, and family in science, practice, and policy relating to older adults.

1. CONA received 2007 Council of Representatives Discretionary Funds to establish a Working Group on Cultural Competency in Geropsychology. The working group met once in May 2007 and is currently writing an article that will identify core principles of infusing cultural competency into geropsychology; set an agenda for achieving cultural competency in education and training, practice, research, and policy; and provide resources for practitioners and researchers interested in this issue.
2. CONA and BAPPI cosponsored a standing-room-only 2007 convention symposium, “*Aging and Health Disparities: Cumulative Effects of Race, Gender, and SES.*” CONA Chair, Rosemary Blieszner, PhD, chaired the symposium of luminaries including David Chiriboga, PhD; Barbara Yee, PhD; and James Jackson, PhD; and Toni Antonucci, PhD, who served as discussant.
3. CONA nominated individuals to serve on the following Public Interest Directorate Committees: Ethnic Minority Affairs; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Concerns; Socioeconomic Status; and on the Board for the Advancement of Psychology in the Public Interest.

**Public Affairs:** Develop and disseminate information concerning the scientific findings and practice issues about older adults to psychologists and other professionals, policy makers, and the public.

1. CONA and the Office on Aging have increased their efforts to advocate for additional coverage of aging issues in the *Monitor on Psychology*. This year CONA contributed to or was featured in the following articles: “CONA Member Florence Denmark, PhD wins the 2007 Fowler Award” (April), “Aging and Health Disparities: Cumulative Effects of Race, Gender, and SES” (May), “Promoting the Mental Health of Older Adults: An Action Agenda for an Aging America” (July/August), “Team-building: A Better Approach to Elderly Care”(October), “Blueprint for Change” (October), “Polishing Those Golden Years” (November), “APA Public Policy Update on Older Adults Health Care” (November), “Sexual Intimacy is Important at Any Age” (December).
2. CONA is currently revising its *Life Plan for the Life Span*, a web-based brochure ([http://www.apa.org/pi/aging/Life\\_Plan.pdf](http://www.apa.org/pi/aging/Life_Plan.pdf)) for health and human service and aging network professionals. CONA believes that this is another mechanism by which it can continue to strengthen the relationships between psychology and these other disciplines, and that the brochure could prove useful in helping these professionals to help those with whom they work.
3. The *APA Committee on Aging Award for the Advancement of Psychology and Aging* was established in 2003 to recognize professional leadership and distinguished achievements in research, practice and education in the field of geropsychology, and to promote an awareness and understanding among psychologists of this growing area of psychology. The 2007 Award was presented to Martha Storandt, PhD, in recognition of her significant research accomplishments including early demonstration that dementia is a disease condition outside of normal aging as well as her ongoing efforts to differentiate across types of dementia. Dr. Storandt served on the steering committee for the 1981 Conference on Training Psychologists for Work with the Aged and helped establish the APA journal, *Psychology and Aging*.

**APA:** Serve as a visible focus for the coordination of information among groups within the APA that address aging issues and offer consultation to relevant APA boards, committees, divisions, state associations, and directorates; also ensure that older members of APA receive the appropriate attention of the association.

1. CONA regularly comments on proposed APA new business items to assure that APA policies are informed by geropsychology principles and that the impact of proposed policies upon older adults is considered. This year comments were submitted for every item on the 2007 Cross Cutting Agendas including the Proposed Revisions of the Recommended Guidelines in Postdoctoral Training in Psychopharmacology for Prescription Privileges; Guidelines for Hospital Privileges; Resolution on Families of Incarcerated Offenders; the Governance Survey on Representation of Women, Ethnic Minorities, Gay Men, Lesbians and Bisexuals; APA Membership Recruitment, Retention and Engagement Strategic Plan; Questions for consideration by President Elect candidates; Publication Manual Revision Task Force Update; CRSPPP Proposed Revisions; Resolution on the Americans with Disabilities Act; Report of the APA Task Force on Implementation of the Multicultural Guidelines; Resolution on Transgender/Gender Identity Non-Discrimination; and Proposed Implementation Plan for the APA Resolution Recommending the Immediate Retirement of American Indian Mascots.
2. CONA members met with APA leaders and governance groups at its meetings to discuss issues of import and potential collaborative efforts including: APA President Sharon Stephens Brehm, PhD; APA President-elect Alan E. Kazdin, PhD; Douglas Handleman, PhD, Ronald Rozensky, PhD, and Melba Vasquez, PhD, Board of Directors; Norman Anderson, PhD, CEO; Gwendolyn Keita, PhD, Executive Director, Public Interest Directorate; Ellen Garrison, PhD, APA Senior Policy Advisor; Psychology Teachers in Community Colleges; American Psychological Association of Graduate Students; Committee on Early Career Psychologists; Committee on Rural Health; Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools; Committee on Disability Issues in Psychology; Committee on Ethnic Minority Affairs; the Ad hoc Committee on Psychology and AIDS; Diane Pedulla, JD, Director of Federal Regulatory Affairs; and Diane Elmore, PhD, Patricia Kobor, and Nina Levitt, EdD, APA Government Relations Office. Liaisons to CONA, Douglas Kimmel, PhD (Board for the Advancement of Psychology in the Public Interest) and Angela Jefferson, PhD (Division 40, Clinical Neuropsychology) also participate in CONA meetings.
3. CONA submitted nominations of psychologists with aging expertise for 2007 Call for Nominations for APA Boards and Committees.
4. CONA began preparations for special programming and events to celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of CONA and the Office on Aging at the 2008 APA Convention. Events being planned include a special symposium with a nationally known speaker to attract a large audience of psychologists across subfields and an all-day continuing education program, *What Psychologists Should Know about Working with Older Adults*, targeting non-geropsychology practitioners. A festive reception will be held in conjunction with the CONA Conversation Hour.

### **Diversity Training and Representation:**

CONA is strongly committed to multiple aspects of diversity in terms of both its composition and its annual agenda.

1. Committee Composition: CONA acknowledges the importance of having members who represent diversity according to gender, age, and race/ethnicity as well as scientific expertise and level of professional experience. These forms of diversity are all fundamentally important

to accomplishing CONA's mission. The small size of the committee ( $N = 6$ ) and the small number of yearly replacements ( $n = 2$ ) necessitate considerable planning and long term strategies in order to achieve diversity across these multiple domains.

In keeping with this commitment, CONA established an Early Career Professionals slate for its 2007 nominees. CONA views this action as one strategy to mentor early- and mid-career geropsychologists for increased participation in APA Governance as well as a way to reach out to a younger cohort of geropsychologists who are more ethnically diverse than previous cohorts.

For 2008, CONA recruited and nominated an ethnic minority psychologist for membership. This reflects a commitment to another important source of diversity. In addition, CONA works to encourage participation of racial ethnic minority group members in APA governance broadly.

The diversity composition of the 2007 Committee on Aging was three men and three women including one early career psychologist and one older adult. There were no visible or self-identified members of ethnic minority; disability; or lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered populations. Nevertheless, CONA members' clinical and research foci related to diversity include expertise in urban African Americans and in aging issues associated with rural regions and international settings. For example, members include Peter Lichtenberg, PhD, ABPP, who is the Co-director of Michigan Center for Urban African American Aging Research (MCUAAAR) currently in its 10<sup>th</sup> year, and Florence Denmark, PhD, Chair of the United Nations Committee on Ageing, who integrates a multinational perspective on aging issues. Based on his expertise in clinical geropsychology, CONA member Victor Molinari, PhD, ABPP, represents a minority within the group of clinical psychology professionals, who typically do not focus on the aging population.

2. Annual agenda. CONA has expended a great deal of effort toward the goal of increasing the number of psychologists interested in aging, of which there are very few either in the educational pipeline or working in the field. The number of aging scholars from racial ethnic minority groups is even smaller. Part of CONA's efforts with TOPSS and PT@CC, described previously, is aimed at creating greater interest in aging careers in students from racial ethnic minority groups.

CONA established a Working Group on Cultural Competency in Geropsychology, described earlier in this report.

CONA participated in the BIAPPI symposium on "*Aging and Health Disparities: Cumulative Effects of Race, Gender, and SES*" described earlier. Two of the speakers were members of racial ethnic minority groups and all of the speakers presented research results on the experiences of older members of racial ethnic minority groups.