Aging at APA

The Office on Aging works to promote aging issues within APA, among its members, other professionals, policy makers and the public. The Office strives to bring psychological knowledge to bear on issues that affect the health and well-being of older adults and their families. Deborah DiGilio is its Director; Susie Hwang is the Administrative Coordinator.

The Committee on Aging (CONA) is a six-member committee of psychologists with substantive professional expertise in geropsychology who are selected to serve three-year terms. CONA works toward the optimal development of older adults, expanded scientific understanding of adult development and aging, and the delivery of appropriate psychological services to older persons. Current members are: Peter A. Lichtenberg, PhD, ABPP (Chair), Merla Arnold, PhD, RN (Chair-Elect), Chandra Mehrotra, PhD, Victor Molinari, PhD, ABPP, Michael Smyer, PhD, and Dolores Gallagher Thompson, PhD, ABPP. CONA is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year!

Public Interest Government Relations Office works on aging policy issues at the federal level. Diane Elmore, PhD, MPH is the Senior Legislative and Federal Affairs Officer who manages a policy portfolio that includes aging issues.

APA Division 20 (Adult Development & Aging) is concerned with the study of psychological development and change throughout the adult years. Their website includes resources for educators and students, information about graduate programs for students interested in pursuing this field, publications, conference information, and links to other sites.

APA Division 12-Section II (Society for Clinical Geropsychology) is devoted to research, training, and the provision of psychological services for older adults. Their website includes information on training opportunities for students and professionals including clinical psychology internships, postdoctoral fellowship opportunities, and continuing education offerings, and research funding and job information.
CONA Events at the APA 2008 Convention

- Continuing education workshop, “What Psychologists Should Know about Working with Older Adults” cosponsored by CONA and the Office of Continuing Education: Wednesday, August 13th from 8:00am-3:50pm, Webster Room, Westin Boston Waterfront Hotel.

- President Kazdin’s Grand Challenges Presidential Initiative, Presidential Symposium “Responding to the Challenges of Aging: Lessons from Medicine, Psychology, and Law”: Friday, August 15th from 11:00am-12:50pm, Boston Convention Center, Room 253B.

- CONA 10th Anniversary Symposium, “Moving Psychology Forward in an Aging Society: Progress and Possibilities”: Saturday, August 16th from 2:00-2:50 pm, Boston Convention Center, Room 257B.

- “Best Practices of Integrated Care: Opportunities and Challenges” sponsored by CONA and the Committees on Disability in Psychology, Ethnic Minority Affairs, Psychology and AIDS, and the Board for the Advancement of Psychology in the Public Interest: Saturday, August 16, from 5:00-5:50 pm, Boston Convention Center, Room 256.

CONA Award for the Advancement of Psychology and Aging

The recipient of the 2008 Award for the Advancement of Psychology and Aging is Gregory Hinrichsen, PhD. The award was given in recognition of Dr. Hinrichsen’s strong, consistent leadership in the field of professional geropsychology. He has made substantive contributions in areas including the social context of late life depression, interpersonal psychotherapy for late life depression, family caregiving and multicultural gerontology. Congratulations, Dr. Hinrichsen!

ABA/APA Capacity Assessment in Older Adults Project

The ABA/APA Assessment of Capacity in Older Adults Working Group was established in 2003. This collaboration between APA and the ABA Commission on Law and Aging seeks to improve the assessment of capacity of older adults. It’s most recent project is the Assessment of Older Adults with Diminished Capacity: A Handbook for Psychologists. (2008). It joins the handbooks for lawyers (2005) and judges (2006). The handbooks have been very well received. Current members of the Assessment of Capacity in Older Adults Project Working Group are: Barry Edelstein PhD; Peter Lichtenberg, PhD, ABPP; Daniel Marson, JD, PhD; Jennifer Moye, PhD; David Powers, PhD; Charles Sabatino, JD (Director, ABA Commission on Law and Aging); Aida Saldivar, PhD; Erica Wood, JD (Associate Director, ABA Commission on Law and Aging); and Stacey Wood, PhD. It will join the other handbooks on the Office on Aging website after Convention. To receive a complimentary copy of the psychologist handbook contact shwang@apa.org.
Integrated Health Care for an Aging Population (IHAP) Initiative

This Initiative continues the efforts of past-President Sharon Stephens Brehm’s Presidential Task Force. CONA and the Office on Aging are committed to ensuring the wide dissemination of the Blueprint for Change: Achieving Integrated Health Care for an Aging Population and the translation of its recommendations into effective practice. The Blueprint is being disseminated to aging, mental health, health, and consumer organizations nationwide. Articles were printed in the GSA’s Gerontology News, ASA’s Aging Today, and a feature article, “Addressing the Health Needs of Older Workers” appeared in the Journal of Employee Assistance’s issue on Integration of Physical and Mental Health. Fact sheets on integrated health care for older adults are being developed for the following audiences: policymakers, graduate faculty and training directors, and older adults and their families.

Prim ing the Geropsychology Pipeline Project

The goal of CONA’s Priming the Geropsychology Pipeline Project is to expose students and early career psychologists 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 Committee for the American Psychological Association of Graduate Students, Committee on Early Career Psychologists, Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools and the Psychology Teachers in Community Colleges to provide resource materials and information on training opportunities including CE and modify existing curricula on geropsychology topics.

Aging Policy Update

By Diane Elmore, PhD, MPH, Senior Legislative and Federal Affairs Officer in the Public Interest Government Relations Office (PI-GRO)

Highlighting the Mental Health Needs of Older Americans on Capitol Hill

On Thursday, May 15, the APA Public Interest Government Relations Office, along with the American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry (AAGP), the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), and the Older Women’s League (OWL), co-sponsored a congressional briefing entitled, “Meeting the Mental Health Needs of an Aging America: Opportunities and Challenges for Federal Policy.” This event was hosted in honor of Older Americans’ Mental Health Week in cooperation with Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) and Senator Olympia Snowe (R-ME). Several of the most pressing federal mental health and aging policy issues were discussed, including integrated health care, geriatric mental health workforce issues, Medicare parity, and paraprofessional mental health training. Briefing presenters included APA member Toni Antonucci, PhD, University of Michigan; Charles Reynolds, III, MD, University of Pittsburgh; James Finley, National Association of Social Workers; and Ashley Carson, JD, Older Women’s League.
The National Coalition on Mental Health and Aging

Since June 2001, APA has been the organizational home of and has provided staff support to the National Coalition on Mental Health and Aging (NCMHA). APA is the second organization to host this group, which had been hosted since its inception in 1990 by AARP. The purpose of the Coalition is to provide opportunities for its more than 50 professional, consumer, and government organization members to work together towards improving the availability of quality of mental health preventive and treatment strategies to older Americans and their families. APA representatives to NCMHA are Deborah DiGilio (who also serves as its current chair), geropsychologist, David Powers, PhD, and Diane Elmore, PhD of the Public Interest Government Relations Office.

Dr. Antonucci, co-chair of the APA Presidential Task Force on Integrative Healthcare for an Aging Population convened by Past-president Sharon Stephens Brehm, PhD, discussed the task force report, which recommends that health care providers embrace an interdisciplinary model of care. She further urged policy makers to support federal policy initiatives to promote integrated health care, including the Positive Aging Act of 2007 (S. 982/H.R. 1669), which would integrate mental health services for older adults into primary care and other community settings where they reside and receive services.

James Finley, Charles Reynolds III, and Toni Antonucci

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Resources

Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Older Adults: Developed by the APA Division 12-Section II and Division 20 Interdivisional Task Force on Practice in Clinical Geropsychology (2003).

Blueprint for Change: Achieving Integrated Health Care for an Aging Population: Developed by Dr. Sharon Stephen Brehm’s Presidential Task Force on Integrated Health Care for an Aging Population, its intent to provide information for psychologists on how to be effective in contributing to, joining, and creating integrated care team. Task Force members were: Toni Antonucci, PhD (co-chair); Antonette Zeiss, PhD (co-chair); Gregory Hinrichsen, PhD; Deborah King, PhD; Peter Lichtenberg, PhD, ABPP; Martita Lopez, PhD; and Jennifer Manly, PhD.

Geropsychology: It’s Your Future: Produced by the Office on Aging, this fact sheet to promote geropsychology as a career option and encourages students to “Discover the answers…Be a part of the solution…” and directs them to websites to learn exciting areas of research and practice within geropsychology.

Life Plan for the Life Span: Produced by the APA Committee on Aging. It offers guidance and links to resources helpful in planning for legal/financial, health, psychological, social, and work life/retirement issues that often arise as people age.

Psychology and Aging: This brochure describes the contributions of psychologists to the health & well-being of older adults. Its objectives are to: promote psychologists’ contributions to aging issues; and to reinforce ongoing efforts to secure the representation of geropsychology in national efforts to address the needs and support the strengths of our growing older adult population. Made possible by a grant from the Retirement Research Foundation.

Psychology and Aging Resource Guides: These Web-based guides summarize research studies and relevant books and journal articles on important topics including Psychotherapy, Depression and Suicide, Insomnia, Human Sexuality, and Psychological Services in Long Term Care.

*To subscribe to this thrice-yearly, electronic newsletter, please send an email to Susie Hwang at shwang@apa.org*