

On the Newsstand: Special Edition (Cont.)

February 21, 2011

This is a continuation of last month's special edition of On the Newsstand featuring quotes from media coverage of "Current Status and Future Prospects of Clinical Psychology: Toward a Scientifically Principled Approach to Mental and Behavioral Health Care," a Psychological Science in the Public Interest report (Volume 9, Issue 2) by Timothy B. Baker, Richard M. McFall, and Varda Shoham. The following are excerpts from a Washington Post op-ed by the authors of the report.

Is Your Therapist a Little Behind the Times?
By Timothy Baker, Richard McFall and Varda Shoham
The Washington Post
November 15, 2009

"A young woman enters a physician's office seeking help for diabetes. She assumes that the physician has been trained to understand, value and use the latest science related to her disorder. Down the hall, a young man enters a clinical psychologist's office seeking help for depression. He similarly assumes that the psychologist has been trained to understand, value and use current research on his disorder. The first patient would be justified in her beliefs; the second, often, would not. This is the overarching conclusion of a two-year analysis that we recently published on the views and practices of hundreds of clinical psychologists.

"Many psychotherapists openly state that scientific research is largely irrelevant to their practice. Most say that their clinical techniques largely reflect their own insights and experience; they tend not to use the most effective types of treatments available; and they admit to little in the way of scientific training."

"We believe that graduate education is largely to blame for this dismal situation. Graduate programs in psychology do not select science-oriented students to begin with and do not train students to understand and use science once they are enrolled. But we can change this situation, and a new accreditation system will help. The Psychological Clinical Science Accreditation System is designed to recognize only graduate programs that deliver high-quality, science-based, doctoral clinical training. This system, which we are all working with, is intended to "brand" clinical psychologists so that the public, licensing boards and others can identify those who have been trained to use scientifically validated treatments."

"...about half of clinical psychologists are trained today in for-profit schools that are not associated with universities, and many such programs explicitly play down science. Relative to university-based programs, these schools have very large class sizes, faculty with marginal scientific credentials and low admission standards."

"In essence, many of the students being trained by graduate schools are not prepared to understand or use research evidence, let alone contribute their own. Nevertheless, the number of Psy.D.s has burgeoned in recent years. One analysis of clinical doctorates awarded from 1988 to 2001 shows little or

no increase in the award of Ph.D.s but an increase of almost 170 percent in Psy.D.s being granted.”

“Our report and prescription is an attempt to serve as the equivalent of the Flexner Report for clinical psychology. We hope it leads to increased scrutiny of the programs that train psychotherapists. This is our field, one we trained in and care deeply about. We know that these suggestions may make us a few enemies. But we see no other choice.”