

Q: Where can licensed clinicians and counseling residents find collaborative, supportive, and useful interactions and resources that can help them develop clinical mastery while protecting them from the emotional, psychological, financial, ethical, and interpersonal pitfalls of their work?

A: "Based in Virginia Beach, Virginia, the MCG serves clinicians across Virginia and North Carolina through on-site meetings, off site events and activities, and via an online collaboration web portal ... MCG maintains a database of downloadable personal growth and practice related resources including educational materials, articles, patient education materials, tests and assessments, a list of counselor compiled books, movies, CDs and other materials "

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Monitoring the Client on Psychotropic Medications and Avoiding Risk.

Psychotropic medications, especially when combined with talk therapy, generally help people recover from various mental health issues. When an individual who requires psychotropic medications comes in for counseling, you're likely to see the client more often and more regularly than the prescriber. Because of this frequent contact, the therapist has responsibility in monitoring any potential side effects. Because of this frequent contact, the therapist is in an ideal position to help ensure that the treatment – a combination of medication and talk therapy is successful.

During the initial evaluation, one should determine what medications your client is taking and has taken in the past. If a psychotropic medication has been prescribed, it's important to be aware of the purpose of the drug, as well as any side effects that could possible affect your client. Taking the time to educate your client concerning their medication regimen and any possible side effects can help in establish a good working relationship. This is particularly important if the client is an adolescent, because some psychotropic drugs have been linked with increased risk of suicidal thinking and behavior in this age group. Many private practices have the added benefit of

having the prescribing practitioner, typically a psychiatrist, on site, which offers continuity of care for the client.

It's equally important to document your observation of the client's behavior or demeanor regularly. If you as the therapist notice any possible side effects, it should be reported to the psychiatrist, in addition to the clients reporting to the psychiatrist. Document these actions, as well as every conversation you have with the psychiatrist, in the client's chart. It is good practice to keep a complete record of all written and verbal communication with the psychiatrist.

We sometimes don't think of the responsibility we have as the therapist with our clients when it comes to medication. Though it is primarily the responsibility of the prescriber to determine the appropriate medication and its effectiveness, the therapist is an important entity in ensuring the effectiveness of treatment. Being aware of any potential side effects and problems with your client's medication, as well as documenting and immediately reporting difficulties to the prescriber, is the best way to protect your client's well-being and reduce your risk of liability.

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Regional Groups

VACC currently has two regional groups: the Northern Virginia LPC association and the Hampton Roads Association of Clinical Counseling. These groups provide meetings, networking, and advocacy at a local level. At one time, VACC operated three other groups – a Richmond chapter, a Charlottesville chapter, and a Roanoke chapter. We are always willing to support the development of regional groups that serve the needs of VACC members on a local level. In fact, the Roanoke group has a fund of money “in escrow” that could be used as seed money to re-establish the chapter. Should anyone be interested in forming a local group, contact Michael Nahl, Membership Chair, via the website (www.vacc.org).



The Linda Heacock Memorial Fellowships are named for a dear friend of the organization who was a helper and counselor in a number of settings over her life. VACC proudly offers two \$1000 fellowships a year.

Twenty-six contestants submitted essays for the two Linda Heacock Memorial Fellowships worth \$1000 each. The 26 contestants, two male and 24 female, represented nine different graduate schools. ODU had nine contestants, George Mason eight, and Marymount and Virginia Tech had two each. Also represented were JMU, Bellevue, Argosy, Capella, and Regent, each with one contestant. With a maximum of 15 points, scores ranged from 14 to 5, with the median being 9. We appreciate each and every submission, and hope that each contestant learned something about themselves and the profession.

Judging required extra time. While the original three judges all agreed on one contestant as a clear winner, they each had a different candidate for the second scholarship. There was surprising consistency in the top three candidates, but each judge had a different first place candidate for the remaining fellowship. We then brought in four additional judges from our Executive Committee to review the top three essays. In a squeaker, one candidate achieved three first place votes and the others two each.

The Executive Board will be contacting the win-

VACC Crowns 2011 Essay Contest Winners

Our winners are:

Hannah Bayne (Old Dominion University)

Eve Montavon (George Mason University)

Honorable Mention goes to:

Ricshawn Roane (George Mason University)

Ruthie Weiglein (Old Dominion University)

ners in regard to giving them their fellowships. We will also be writing up an account of the contest, with our scoring rubric, in our next newsletter. If our winning authors agree, we may be able to publish their essays as well. We look forward to next year's fellowship contest, but hope that our student contestants will make the most of their student membership in the interim.

Our website (www.vacc.org) provides a wealth of information, and members receive occasional e-mails regarding education opportunities and legislative/advocacy issues that come up. Our Board is also eager to understand how we can be of even greater service to our members, so don't hesitate to contact Board members with your ideas. Warmest regards from the Board!

Member Committee, membership@vacc.org

Special Discount: See column on the next page



Web Site Updates

Have you looked at our website (www.vacc.org) lately? We have some great links, to the Board of Counseling and the Department of Health Professions, to nearby state clinical counseling associations, to AMHCA, to Virginia graduate counseling programs, insurance companies, and to all the state and federal legislators. Our website is a handy site for connecting to other places you might want to go.

For the students, we have a separate page that includes links to the state counseling programs, Board mentors, and a list of clinical supervisors. By the way, any VACC member who provides supervision can list themselves

on our site at no charge. You can also advertise yourself and your practice for free on the Member's Spotlight, which is easy to complete.

Updates on federal and state legislation affecting LPCs can be found on the home page and the You Can Help sections of the website.

Looking for a job? Want to advertise a job position you have available? Need or want to rent office space? We can help. Look for the Job Opportunities section.

Want to renew your membership or become a member? You can do that online. You can also reg-

ister for our conferences and pay for them over the website.

The history of our profession and VACC can also be found on the website, as can recent newsletters and our bylaws.

And, we are now on Facebook and Twitter! Please visit us on Facebook and Twitter for the latest news, announcements, event and membership information. Connect with us on Facebook and Twitter to instantly share your comments, ideas, videos, pictures and links.

There's much more. And don't forget to tell a colleague about us! www.vacc.org

Advertising

Northern Virginia

Northern Virginia Licensed Professional Counselors (NVLPC) is a professional organization for counselors in the Northern Virginia area, with approximately 300 members. It is one of the regional groups of the Virginia Association of Clinical Counselors. We believe that NVLPC provides extraordinary value for the services we provide our members. As a member you will have the opportunity to attend 14 lunch trainings with continuing education credits and 2 workshops per year, including an ethics workshop in November. NVLPC also provides networking opportunities for members, approved supervisors, groups for students, a prelicensed support group, and a therapist finder and member directory on our website. We also offer a monthly newsletter and opportunities for leadership. We would love you to join us. If you join before September 1, 2011, you will save \$15.00 on your membership fee. For more information on NVLPC, please visit our website at www.NVLPC.org.

Board Member Granted Emeritus Status

Roger Snapp-Laplace, a recent recipient of the VACC Distinguished Service Award, has served on the VACC Executive Board for well over 20 years. He is now in the process of retiring and relocating to Hawaii. The Executive Board recently voted to confer Emeritus status upon Roger, making him an **honorary VACC member for life**. It is expected that the VACC Board will still draw on Roger's advice and talents from time to time, albeit long-distance.

Roger is a longtime resident of Roanoke, wherein he has been co-owner of Comprehensive Counseling Services for many years. Twice the President of VACC, Roger has also served in many other Board positions, most recently as Treasurer



and Chair of the Legislative Committee. His attendance at Board meetings, workshops, and other activities has been laudatory, and he has been unfailing in his service to VACC and the clinical counseling profession.

A stellar example of our profession, Roger is known for his warmth, his sense of humor, his steady presence, and his good judgment. Although the Board regrets his impending departure from our midst, we wish him and his wife Jinger all the joy in the world in their new location in Hawaii! Bon Voyage!

Mike Nahl, mnah1@vacc.org

Congrats can be emailed to him at: Roger@vacc.org



NBCC Government Affairs Update

Medicare

On March 17, 2011, Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR) introduced S. 604, the Seniors Mental Health Access Improvement Act of 2011. S. 604 is identical to past Medicare bills and adds licensed professional counselors (LPCs) and marriage and family therapists (MFTs) to the list of recognized Medicare mental health providers.

S. 604 has six original cosponsors, including Sens. Barrasso (R-WY), Begich (D-AK), Brown (D-OH), Durbin (D-IL), Inouye (D-HI) and Johnson (D-SD). Sens. Boxer (D-CA) and Conrad (D-ND) signed on as cosponsors after introduction. The bill must pass the Senate Finance Committee, where Sens. Wyden and Conrad serve as members.

The coalition of counseling and MFT organizations is seeking to add cosponsors to S. 604, as well as identify a House champion. Several representatives have expressed an interest in a House bill and a sponsor is expected to be named soon.

The prospects for passage of the Medicare bill are unclear. The very tight budget environment creates a higher threshold for passing any legislation with an associated cost. While the cost of our provision is modest compared to the overall budget, every issue will be given increased scrutiny. The most likely vehicle for inclusion is legislation to halt increases in the physician payment scale that will be on the congressional agenda later in the year.

TRICARE/Defense

On January 6, 2011, Rep. Tom Rooney (R-FL) and Rep. Larry Kissell (D-NC) introduced H.R. 208 to modify statutory language to grant counselors independent practice rights under TRICARE. This bill is a reintroduction of H.R. 3839, the CARES Act, from the 111th Congress.

H.R. 208 was introduced as a backup to a provision passed this January in H.R. 6523, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). The NDAA language required the adoption of regulations allowing for independent practice by counselors, but it did not change existing statute. The NDAA language will likely be sufficient to address the limitations on counselors, but H.R. 208 provides an option for continued advocacy if the regulations are not adequate.

NBCC also represented the counseling profession in a White House meeting on “Enhancing the Well-Being and Psychological Health of the Military Family” in March 2011. The meeting included senior staff from the first lady’s and vice president’s office, as well as leaders from the mental health and medical fields. The meeting was followed by a White House press event on April 12 that included President Obama and Vice President Biden, and launched the Joining Forces initiative. The first lady, Michele Obama, and the vice president’s wife, Dr. Jill Biden, created the initiative to mobilize all sectors of society to support and honor service members, veterans and their families. NBCC is a partner in the initiative and will be participating in future events.

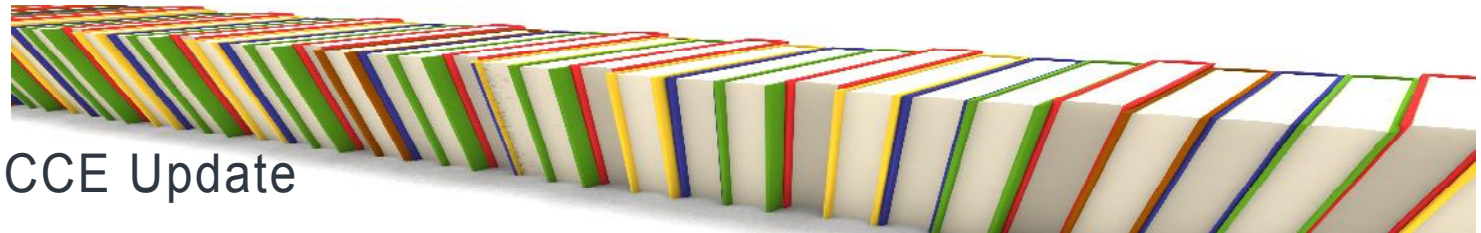
On April 29, NBCC also participated in a conference call for the Marriage and Family Counseling Collaborative (MFCC). The collaborative is made up of behavioral health associations, military services, federal agencies and universities, and seeks to serve as a venue for clinical providers who wish to collaborate and share resources relating to the psychological health and well-being of military and veteran families.

Veterans

NBCC and the American Counseling Association (ACA) met with senior mental health staff from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) on May 2 to discuss the implementation of the new qualification standards and employment of counselors. Monitoring of jobs has demonstrated that counselors are only slowly being hired into the VA system, and the objective was to identify deficiencies and streamline the process.

The VA staff was unaware of the slow pace of implementation and was attentive to our concerns about specific problems. They agreed to increase education of VA mental health staff about hiring policies and to ensure counselors were being appropriately considered for positions. The VA also offered to facilitate information sharing between the organizations and administration mental health staff. NBCC will continue to monitor the process and work with the VA to address concerns and opportunities. NCCs who are interested in job opportunities with the VA are encouraged to reach out to local facilities and educate staff about the counseling profession and the new qualification standards. NCCs who apply for jobs should report any problems, or successes, to NBCC.

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CCE Update

The Center for Credentialing & Education (CCE) offers several credentials that can help counselors carve out new niche practices. Recently, we have seen tremendous growth in professional coaching, career development, human services and distance counseling.

The new Board Certified Coach (BCC) credential is ideal for NCCs who have completed 30 hours of coaching education and wish to establish their identity as a professional coach. Visit www.cce-global.org/BCC for more information on how you can become a BCC during the inaugural period as part of our norming population. After the inaugural period ends December 31, 2011, applicants will be required to meet additional educational requirements and pass the BCC examination. Please visit our Web site for complete details.

In response to the high level of unemployment—both in the United States and internationally—there has been a sharp rise

in the number of counselors obtaining the Global Career Development Facilitator (GCDF) credential to aid their clients in finding new jobs. The total number of GCDFs is nearly 20,000, and that number continues to climb. This career credential is a global credential, with certification offered in more than 15 countries, including the U.S.

CCE has the credentials that can help you stand out in your particular market—whether you work in counseling, the correctional system, human services, career development, supervision, distance counseling, or in another helping profession. Visit www.cce-global.org/prof/credentials to learn more about the credentials that could benefit you.

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The Master Clinicians' Group

A New Opportunity for Professional and Personal Growth

Where can licensed clinicians and counseling residents find collaborative, supportive, and useful interactions and resources that can help them develop clinical mastery while protecting them from the emotional, psychological, financial, ethical, and interpersonal pitfalls of their work?

Where can they access training materials, client education resources, tests and assessments, treatment protocols, and case staffing and consultation services, and more . . . all in one place?

Where can they share ideas, experience, and expertise with fellow clinicians in a collaborative environment?

Where can they do all of this at no charge?
Welcome to the Master Clinicians' Group.

Isolation. Lack of peer support. Limited exposure to new treatment options. Restricted access to excellent no-cost resources. Infrequent or poor quality interactions with other professionals. Inadequate self care. These are some of the most significant obstacles associated with clinical practice. Many Counselors are so busy with their work or Residencies that they have little time for professional development or peer relationships. Worse, they often don't have time or resources to engage in personally enriching activities, or just don't take time to nurture friendships and their own spirits. None are immune from the negative sequelae of such isolation and insulation. They suffer. Their clients suffer. Their loved ones suffer. Their practices suffer. Our profession suffers.

These factors stymie growth and prevent many talented people from ever achieving the level of skill knowledge, and ability required to be recognized as a Master Clinician.

The Master Clinicians' Group exists to resolve and prevent these problems.

What exactly is a Master Clinician?

Master clinicians are *clinical professionals whose training, knowledge, skill, ability, insight, discernment, drive, dedication, and perseverance define them as the "best of the best," or as people on the journey to attain that level of Mastery; people who possess the passion and motivation to commit and be dedicated to structures and purposes that advance our profession and increase our effectiveness.*

The essential element that differentiates a Master Clinician from a "good" clinician is the quality and effectiveness of the networks he or she develops, participates in, and nurtures. A primary Goal of the MCG is to provide a dynamic network offering various means of growth and professional development for those who truly strive to be the best clinicians possible.

Based in Virginia Beach, Virginia, the MCG serves clinicians across Virginia and North Carolina through on-site meetings, off site events and activities, and via an online collaboration web portal that allows "distance participation" by members who live or work outside the Hampton Roads and Northeastern North Carolina vicinity.

The MCG was founded on the premise that clinicians work best when they are part of a collaborative community comprised of like-minded professionals, and that Master Clinicians are developed through such relationships. The broader function of the MCG is to serve as a peer resource, training provider, referral source, font of friendship and social support; and source of opportunities to enjoy ourselves in social activities that will relax us, test our mettle, entertain us, exercise our bodies and minds, test our stamina, tickle our funny bones, expand our palates, and any other thing that members have in mind to enrich their personal as well as professional lives.

What does the MCG offer its members?

The MCG is dedicated to providing practical and practice relevant training, peer consultation, peer supervision, case staffing, essential self care opportunities, recreational events, and enriching collaborative environments for its members. In addition to these services, the MCG maintains a database of downloadable personal growth and practice related resources including educational materials, articles, patient education materials, tests and assessments, a list of counselor compiled books, movies, CDs and other materials. The MCG also keeps members abreast of Board of Counseling and news, publishes a list of outside training events, provides opportunities for members to take advantage of group discounts, engages dynamic guest speakers, provides experiential learning, and is a great source for developing friendships and professional networks.

Members who live or work in Hampton Roads participate on-site in regularly scheduled group activities and events while members who live outside of the Hampton Roads area can participate via Skype (or another web or phone based video call system of their choice). All members participate in the life and management of the group through the MCG Collaboration web portal.

As a member-driven group, the MCG adapts to the needs of its members and is open to new ideas, change, and innovation. Technology makes it possible for Remote Members to be as influential and engaged as those who participate on-site.

What about Supervision?

MCG Members believe that the best place to begin developing Master Clinicians is at the beginning of practice. Therefore, the MCG offers an added benefit to Counseling Residents. Residents who are active members of the MCG have the option of receiving deeply discounted group supervision for their participation in group meeting activities. The MCG also offers free peer supervision (up to 10 Continuing Education Credits per year) to active members who are licensed as Professional Counselors.

Who can become a member and how?

Membership in the Master Clinicians' Group is open to all Licensed Mental Health counselors in Virginia and North Carolina, and to Counseling Residents working in clinical settings. VACC members and their associates are welcome and strongly encouraged to join and participate either via live meetings or events or via the comprehensive web presence.

How do I join the MCG?

• Joining the MCG is simple. You can do it in one of two ways:

Go to <https://www.bigtent.com/groups/mcgmail> and click on the "Not a member yet" link in the "sign in" box, and follow the directions provided.

OR

Email Jodi Moore at stillwaters@cox.net to have an invitation email sent to your email inbox. Simply click on the link in this email and follow the directions provided.

Three membership levels serve to meet needs of members at different levels of development. Licensed Members, Residents, and Interns all participate in all aspects of group life while having their own niche relevant to their specific levels. There is no fee for becoming a member.

Are you a Master Clinician? Do you want to become a Master Clinician?

If you answered "Yes" to either of these questions, please consider becoming a part of this dynamic community.

Want more information? Please email Jodi Moore (the MCG facilitator and website manager) at stillwaters@cox.net.

The MCG welcomes you!

Joanne (Jodi) M. Moore, LPC, NCC, BCETS, CCH



Friends: VACC and VAMFT

In May of 2010, VACC received an e-mail from one of the Board Members of the Virginia Association of Marriage and Family Therapy, inviting collaboration on issues and projects that might be of common interest. Our Board agreed and we have since sent representatives to each other's board meetings, getting to know each other better. We have a similar role, as VACC is the state chapter of the American Mental Health Counselors Association, and VAMFT is the con-state chapter of the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy.

Our collaboration has already resulted in the agreement of each organization to offer the preferred membership rate conference fee to members of the other association. For instance, VACC usually has a tiered fee to conferences, discounting the fee if one is a VACC member. Now we will offer the same discounted fee to VAMFT members who attend our conferences, and VAMFT will extend their preferred membership rate to those VACC members who attend their conferences. We see this as a win-win proposition in regard to attendance at workshops

and conferences.

VACC and VAMFT have also agreed to establish contact between Legislative Committee chairs so as to help each other watchdog bills that may affect our organizations. Other collaborations are also possible as imagination and resources permit. We look forward to a mutually rewarding alliance.

Michael Nahl, mnah1@vacc.org



Web Site Development

Please visit us on Facebook and Twitter for the latest news, announcements, event and membership information. Connect with us on Facebook and Twitter to instantly share your comments, ideas, videos, pictures and links.

Borderline Conference a Success

VACC is in the midst of planning our conference slate for this coming year, so if any of you want to help us out, contact Penny Norford, our Conference Committee Chair at conference@vacc.org.

Our last workshop was held at the Tuckahoe Library in Richmond on January 28th. Sixty-seven attendees enjoyed an excellent presentation by international expert Dr. Robert O. Friedel, author of *Borderline Personality Disorder Demystified*. The workshop featured other members of Dr. Friedel's multifaceted Richmond treatment team as well. Michael Jeffrey, a past-president of VACC, spoke on the diagnostic criteria for borderline personality disorder, particularly in regard to the premise that BPD is a disorder of the anxiety part of the brain. Michael and Dr. Grace Hadeed spoke on the importance of family diagnosis and participation in treatment. The workshop drew attendees of different disciplines, some of whom came a considerable distance to hear Dr. Friedel. Reviews were very good, and we hope to have another such conference this year, perhaps in the spring.

Serving the needs of Virginia Clinical Counselors since 1980

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