

REPORT OF THE DIVISION 40 TASK FORCE ON EDUCATION,
ACCREDITATION AND CREDENTIALING

Recommendations for Education and Training of
Nondoctoral Personnel in Clinical Neuropsychology

The use of nondoctoral personnel (at both the Bachelor's degree and Master's degree level) is a common, recognized, and accepted practice in many areas of psychology when supervised by a qualified licensed psychologist who maintains and monitors high standards of quality assurance. In all such situations, these individuals represent the extension of the licensed psychologist, and fulfil limited and clearly circumscribed roles. The use of such nondoctoral personnel is consistent with the policies and procedures defined by the American Psychological Association (*General Guidelines for Providers of Psychological Services*, APA, 1987; *Specialty Guidelines for the Delivery of Psychological Services by Clinical Psychologists*, APA, 1981; and *Ethical Principles of Psychologists*, APA, 1981). In addition, the use of nondoctoral personnel in the area of clinical neuropsychological assessment has been previously addressed (Division 40 Task Force on Education, Accreditation and Credentialing, 1989). That document endorses the use of such personnel in neuropsychological assessment, and defines the roles and responsibilities of psychologists who elect to utilize such personnel. Discussion has arisen in several constituencies regarding the requisite training and educational qualifications for nondoctoral personnel involved in neuropsychological assessment. The current document sets forward some recommended areas of education and training for these personnel (hereafter termed psychometrists). The committee members who contributed to the development of this document included R.A. Bornstein (chair), Roberta White, and James Hom.

Education

Psychometrists should have a Bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited college or university, preferably with a major in Psychology. This basic educational background provides individuals with the necessary background in the science of psychology, and provides the basic academic coursework which serves as a foundation upon which further training in neuropsychological test administration can be based. This coursework typically includes instruction in Abnormal Psychology, Personality, Statistics, and Psychological Testing. Individuals who have completed degrees with non-Psychology majors may also have completed coursework in this area. Individuals who do not have this academic background should be provided with specific information to supplement their training in neuropsychological test administration.

Training

In addition to formal university- or college-based preparation, individuals require training and instruction in numerous areas that pertain to their role as a psychometrist. In addition to the learning of specific test procedures (see below), the psychometrist-trainee must become aware of the goals of neuropsychological examination and his/her specific role in achieving that end. The psychometrist-trainee should also receive training in ethical issues, methods of dealing with situations that arise in the context of assessment, and specific instruction in regard to the limits of his/her role, and relationships with the supervising neuropsychologist in addition to other psychometrists. Each of these topics are considered below.

Administration and Scoring of Neuropsychological Tests

Without question the competence of the examiner is a critical aspect of all assessment (Boll, 1981). In most settings, the most demanding technical requirement for the psychometrist-trainee is to be thoroughly trained in the specific assessment techniques advocated by the supervising neuropsychologist. Psychometrists should be provided with manuals for each test which explicitly define the instructions for administration and scoring. Many neuropsychologists require that standardized test instructions be completely memorized. This complete memorization enhances the efficiency of test administration, permits the psychometrist to focus his/her attention on the patient, and may enhance patient motivation and cooperation. Psychometrists should not be permitted to administer any test to any patient until their mastery of instructions for that specific procedure has been documented by the supervising neuropsychologist (or in some cases a senior level psychometrist).

Extensive early practice administering tests to persons other than patients is essential. In many cases, psychometrist-trainees learn the various procedures in sequence so that they may begin to administer a limited number of tests (on which their mastery has been documented) to the patients being examined by other psychometrists while they learn additional tests. In all cases, the administration of tests to patients by new technicians should be closely supervised and monitored by the neuropsychologist or a senior psychometrist with extensive experience in administration of these procedures. At the completion of the training period, the supervising neuropsychologist should provide written documentation for the psychometrist's file which indicates the nature and duration of training, and which indicates that the psychometrist has satisfactorily completed the training program. For all psychometrists regularly scheduled follow-up supervisory sessions should occur to ensure that standardized administration and scoring procedures are maintained.

Psychometrist's role in achieving the goals of assessment

One typical goal of neuropsychological assessment is to determine a patient's optimal level of performance on a particular battery of tasks. It is important that the psychometrist-trainee understand the philosophical goal of the examination

procedures. In addition to test administration, it is typically the role of the psychometrist to establish rapport with the patient, and to structure the assessment session to motivate the patient in order to facilitate accomplishing the goal of the examination. Psychometrist-trainees and new psychometrists should meet regularly with more experienced psychometrists and/or the supervising neuropsychologist to discuss effective procedures for establishing rapport and facilitating patient motivation and performance.

Ethics

It is the responsibility of the supervising neuropsychologist to provide explicit guidance regarding ethical issues that pertain to their activities in neuropsychological examination. These issues include (but are not limited to) protection of patient confidentiality, protection of the confidentiality of test information regarding patients, maintenance and protection of test security, and constraints about dual relationships with patients (or supervisors). The supervising neuropsychologist should provide access to the appropriate APA documents, and may also find it helpful to develop a document describing various ethical issues and the associated constraints these place on the psychometrist.

Situations Arising in the Context of Assessment Sessions

Psychometrists may be working with patients who have a variety of neurological or other medical conditions. It is important for the psychometrist to be aware of appropriate institutional emergency procedures to deal with various medical emergencies such as heart attack, respiratory arrest, seizures, and so forth. In addition to medical emergencies, psychometrists should be aware of recommended procedures for dealing with incompetent or adjudicated patients who attempt to leave the testing setting without authorization. Psychometrists must be trained to be sensitive to subtle or overt suicidal or homicidal threats or innuendoes made during testing. Psychometrists may also be exposed to aggressive or sexually inappropriate behavior on the part of patients, and should be provided with specific instructions on how to handle these situations. The very nature of the assessment situation often elicits requests for information and reassurance by the patient in regard to the adequacy of their performance. It is critical that psychometrists understand the distinction between offering support or encouragement (which is within their role) and evaluative feedback (which is solely within the purview of the supervising neuropsychologist).

Limitation of the Psychometrists Role

It is essential that psychometrists have an explicit understanding of the limited nature of their role in neuropsychological examination. The supervising neuropsychologist must clearly delineate the lines of authority between him/herself and the psychometrist. The psychometrist should be made aware at the time of their employment that their role in the overall process is important, but nonetheless, by definition, is narrowly defined. As stated in a previous Task

Force Report, the role of the psychometrist is strictly limited to the administration and scoring of certain test procedures that are selected, interpreted, and communicated by the licensed neuropsychologist. Similarly, psychometrists should be explicitly instructed not to present him/herself to patients in a manner that implies any independent professional prerogatives.

Some prospective psychometrists may inappropriately view employment as an entry into the professional practice of neuropsychology. It is the responsibility of the supervising neuropsychologist to correct any misperceptions about the potential for growth in the roles and responsibilities of psychometrist. It should be specifically stated that test selection, interpretation, or communication of results are professional activities performed only by the supervising neuropsychologist. It should be further stipulated that these roles are not, nor will they ever be the responsibility of the psychometrist. Psychometrists may make notes during the examination of a patient's behavior, but the interpretation of those behaviors, and the incorporation into a report is strictly the responsibility of the licensed psychologist.

Professional Relationships With Others

The psychometrist should be provided with an organizational structure of the setting in which he/she works. This should include clear delineation of lines of authority, and directions regarding to whom the psychometrist is responsible for various aspects of his/her performance. Some settings employ more senior psychometrists with supervisory responsibilities over the daily conduct of the laboratory. These senior psychometrists may have Master's degrees, or may have several years of experience (following a Bachelor's degree). In any case, the supervising neuropsychologist has the ultimate and legal responsibility for supervising all aspects of work by the psychometrist.

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