

A Video-conferencing Peer Consultation Group for Psychotherapy by Early-Career Psychiatrists

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To enhance the further development of psychodynamic psychotherapy skills in early-career psychiatrists (ECPs), the author describes a project being initiated by the American College of Psychoanalysts. The format will be biweekly peer consultation groups in which an experienced psychoanalyst will participate. The focus will be on actual case experiences of the ECPs, drawn from their work with any patient with whom psychotherapy skills are being used. To make the opportunity available to ECPs who do not live where they have access to advanced psychotherapy courses or consultation, the “virtual grand rounds” will be conducted by video-conferencing. (*Journal of Psychiatric Practice* 2015;21:304–305)

KEY WORDS: psychotherapy, psychodynamic, early-career psychiatrist, video-conferencing, peer consultation, American College of Psychoanalysts

In my May 2015 column in this journal,¹ I exhorted early-career psychiatrists (ECPs) to take active steps to enhance the development of their psychotherapy skills. I urged them to be determined to keep conducting psychotherapy with at least some patients, no matter in what practice environment they worked. I also advised them to get consultation or supervision with an experienced therapist or to take continuing education courses or workshops in a formal, coherent model of psychotherapy, such as psychodynamic psychotherapy or cognitive-behavioral therapy, and to attempt to conduct work with some patients using the full format of the model they are studying. This is consistent with recommendations in a recent paper on obstacles to the practice of psychotherapy by ECPs,² published by the Psychotherapy Committee of the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry.

Many large cities have psychoanalytic institutes or other programs that provide such opportunities for further learning and supervised work. Unfortunately,

some cities do not, and many psychiatrists live and work in less populated areas far from such resources. A task force of the American College of Psychoanalysts has studied this challenge and developed a program that it hopes will address it through the use of video-conferencing. The initial pilot program, titled “Clinical enhancement of psychotherapy skills: psychotherapy virtual grand rounds,” will begin this fall. Methods for evaluating the trial are being developed. The program is free of charge, thanks to a Laughlin grant to the College.

The peer group consultation sessions will be conducted every other week over a period of approximately 6 to 9 months. Each group will consist of 6 to 8 ECPs along with an experienced psychoanalyst who is a Fellow of the American College of Psychoanalysts. The group will focus on case material presented by the participants. The work will not be limited to patients with whom the ECP intends to use full-scale psychodynamic methodology. Attempting to start from where the ECPs are in their practices and the patients they are treating, the group will be open to the psychotherapeutic aspects of whatever ECPs are doing. The psychoanalyst may also share some clinical experiences of her or his own, to enrich the discussion. Confidentiality of patient information will be assured.

The College hopes that ECPs will welcome this opportunity. It will be publicized through psychiatric newsletters and word of mouth, as well as through American Psychiatric Association national and district branch meetings and ECP contacts. More information is available by contacting the program administrator, Patricia Troy, at: ptroy@nextwavegroup.net (410-647-5002).

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PSYCHOTHERAPY

Editor's Note: Congratulations to our Psychotherapy columnist, Drew Clemens, on his election as the President of the American College of Psychoanalysts, yet another distinctive reflection of his outstanding career!

REFERENCES

1. Clemens NA. An open letter to early career psychiatrists. *J Psychiatr Pract.* 2015;21:214–219.
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