

ATTENTION: Senate Committee into registration of psychologists under Medicare

FROM: Harry Mayr, Principal Psychologist,

DATE: 12th April 2011

Dear Sir / Ms,

My name is Harry Mayr and I am the Principal Psychologist and owner of the St Marys / Penrith Psychological Services. My present registration number under national registration is [REDACTED]. I am a very proud psychologist and graduated as one in 1978. I forward this letter to you out of utter frustration and sadness for what is happening within my very treasured profession. A large proportion of psychologists are not receiving the high standard of recognition and support they should be as members of such a vital profession. They are actually being treated at a standard that would render us in breach of our professional ethics if applied to our clients. Finally, they are also now facing dis-endorsement within the Medicare system for not belonging to an APS college.

I will illustrate my above concerns by summarizing my history in the field:

- gained Bachelor of Science (1977) and Master of Arts (1978) from Sydney University ; Psychology Major
- In my second year at University I personally undertook and organized my own 'practicum'. I joined the Lifeline organisation, for which I remained a volunteer for 9 years. I was an active committee member in this organisation, and was responsible for many of the professional development and supervision workshops / sessions. This service was based on Rogerian Client-Centred Therapy principles, but also promoted techniques from Gestalt, Transactional Analysis, Rational Emotive, and Psychodynamic theories.
- In 1979 I went back to Sydney University as an un-enrolled student, undertaking Developmental Psychology III and Abnormal Psychology III, as I wanted a background in both.
- I gained employment within the Department of Health in 1981 (Polyclinic Mount Druitt), where I worked within the Mental Health / Drug and Alcohol team. I stayed there for nine years. I then worked as a trainer for the Department of Community Services for 4 years. During these public service years I attended regular and many inservice, personal and professional, development courses e.g. child protection, disability.
- In 1991 I worked for Centacare Catholic Services in an innovative youth brokerage project which I managed. I was married by then and on the way to having two daughters.
- I undertook and completed my Diploma in Education in 1983/4 from UNSW. In 1994 I completed one year at Wollongong University, again as an unenrolled student, and undertook Sport Psychology subjects under Professor Anschel.
- In the 1980's I started working part-time as a consultant psychologist with the Clenton Park Medical Centre, the Blythe Centre, LEAP vocational training and eventually the St Marys Psychological Services.
- Between 1994 and 2001 I undertook 3 hour weekly training to become a therapist for the International Transactional Analysis movement. Many practical professional skills were learned in this training.

- Since 1995 until the present I have owned and been the Principal Psychologist of the St Marys / Penrith Psychological Services. I employ 6 consultant psychologists at the centre. I have been a NSW Board endorsed supervisor of Psychology students since 2006.
- I am registered as a NSW Children's Court Clinician, Victims of Crime Counsellor, and Work Cover Approved psychologist.
- I have a good reputation in the psychological field and am respected by many allied and other health professionals e.g. psychiatrists, judges, lawyers.
- In 2009 I applied to become a member of the APS College of Clinical Psychology – with support from two well known members of this college. I was informed I needed to go back and do more study and then undergo two years supervision.
- I now concentrate on running a very professional psychological practice.

I believe I undertook my formation in psychology **long before** it became necessary to do so. I accrued what I considered necessary and essential skills via workshops, training courses, and conferences as described previously. It seems I did all this 'at the wrong time' and 'in the wrong way'. Had I waited till the APS accredited certain courses and simply attended them, I would have easily become an approved Clinical Psychologist. I believe I have been functioning as a Clinical Psychologist for years now.

I believe that evaluating competencies are the best measure of whether a Clinical Psychologist can perform their duties and obligations or not – not just the degrees they have undertaken. I therefore urge the national board to establish a competency test that can do exactly this. I would welcome the chance to undertake this test and prove my worth as a Clinical Psychologist. This test could take the form of an exam, observation panel, supplied assessment reports, professional referee letters, evaluated video sessions and/or three mock therapy sessions (e.g. introduction, assessment, treatment of a specific condition). It does not matter what form this test would take, I am just keen to prove my expertise and show that the present basis of distinction between APS acknowledged Clinical Psychologists and Psychologists is an arbitrary distinction and is **not evidence based. Research into this issue would be greatly interesting and welcomed.**

Please consider the above points and realise that all the extra training and professional development I did is 'not good enough' because by the time the APS caught up to training Clinical Psychologists the field had distanced itself from the recognized therapies of old, and were prioritising CBT mainly. I cannot help it if I am old (lol).

Thank you for your consideration of the above in this matter.

Yours Sincerely,

Harry Mayr, Psychologist [REDACTED], JP., Principal Psychologist, St Marys / Penrith Psychological Services ; Member, Australian Psychological Society