

## CLINICAL EDUCATORS: WHAT CAN WE DO FOR YOU?

The Focus topic of the Spring 2004 issue of *Communiqué* dealt with student supervision. Clinicians make significant contributions to the profession by taking on the role of student supervisor and CASLPA is committed to recognizing the importance of this aspect of our scope of practice. To highlight the value of members taking an active role as clinical supervisors, we have solicited articles on unique clinical settings and supervision programs and/or outstanding clinical supervisors.

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The School of Communication Sciences and Disorders (SCSD) at the University of Western Ontario finds itself in a somewhat unique situation – it is one of the larger professional programs in speech-language pathology and audiology in one of the smaller cities. Although we face many of the same challenges as the other Canadian programs in finding practicum placements for our students, I am struck by the incredible support and dedication to clinical education of the professional community in southwestern Ontario. This article is written as a tribute to, and in appreciation of, these professionals.

The accompanying photograph is of our Speech-Language Pathology Clinical Education Advisory Committee, a committee of representatives from a variety of community agencies in the Thames Valley region and other speech-language pathologists who have shown a particular interest in clinical education. Many of the other university programs have a similar committee. The name of this committee at the Université de Laval is “Le comité des Sages” – “The Committee of the Wise”. What a wonderful and appropriate name for a committee such as this! Our own “Comité des Sages” meets with the school



Members of the University of Western Ontario Speech-Language Pathology Clinical Education Advisory Committee.  
Back row: Carol Harrison, Julie Hughes, Alyssa Hollingsworth, Yolanda Nieuwesteeg, Danya Walker, Bev Preson, Sue Schurr  
Front row: Anne Godden-Webster, Kim Spylo, Donna Bandur, Cheryl Cameron, Janice Long, Kerry Erle  
Absent: Debbie Maund, Debbie Shugar, Rosine Salazar, Rose Sinclair, Jacqueline Lawrence, Deb Almost

director and clinical faculty from the school approximately twice a year to exchange information on new developments in the community or in the university and to discuss issues of common concern related to clinical education. These agencies each provide practicum placements to several students every academic term – for them, clinical supervision is not a “once a year” activity. As we all know, the professions of speech-language pathology and audiology and the university programs rely on volunteers to provide a significant portion of the hands-on clinical training of their future professionals. The School of Physiotherapy at the University of Western Ontario has estimated that the contribution of volunteer clinical educators constitutes about 50% of its program. Although we are always thinking about ways of encouraging more individuals to assume the role of clinical educator, we must also think about ways of just saying “thank you” for the countless hours these individuals contribute to the development of our future professionals. In other words, what can the university programs and professional associations do to support clinical education and clinical educators?

This question was discussed at a recent meeting of our clinical education advisory committee. A number of ideas were generated at this meeting and from other informal discussions I have held with clinical educators. The suggestions include:

### 1. Enhancing Continuing Education Activities

Universities could provide continuing education activities free of charge or at reduced cost, for clinical educators. These might include clinical updates or specialized workshops. At the University of Western Ontario, we organize an annual interdisciplinary conference for clinical educators and serve as a site for group teleconferences like those offered by ASHA. Clinical educators are also offered online access to the University of Western Ontario library resources, a practice which is common at several of the Canadian programs.

### 2. Providing Education on Clinical Education

The universities and the professional associations could offer more professional development on the clinical education process. CASLPA might consider developing an online course related to clinical supervision. As described in a recent issue of *Communiqué*, the University of British Columbia (UBC) has developed a website which provides information and resources on clinical education. Following UBC’s lead, the University of Western Ontario has just launched a website to foster discussion concerning dilemmas or difficult situations encountered in clinical supervision.

### 3. Providing Research Assistance

Universities could provide more research assistance to clinicians in the community. One member of the clinical education advisory committee stated that she has many ideas for projects but does not have the time to pursue them. The universities might consider allocating some student research assistants to clinical educators in the community. According to Mary Edwards of the School of Rehabilitation Science at McMaster University, students in an evidence-based practice course at the university are assigned to a facility to participate in projects that are currently underway or to develop a project that has not already been implemented.

#### 4. Linking Student Projects to the Needs and Interests of Clinical Educators

In the course of their studies, students often carry out library literature review projects that may or may not be relevant to clinical educators. To make these projects more relevant, the School of Occupational Therapy at McMaster University solicits questions from clinicians in the community concerning a clinical dilemma or issue. Students research and write a paper on the proposed question or topic and the paper is sent to the clinician. In this way, the interests of both the student and the clinical educator can be met.

A related activity that could benefit or enhance practice in a clinical facility would be to ask students to develop resource materials or education packages for use in public education.

#### 5. Developing a Common Student Evaluation Protocol

Clinical educators are often interested in supervising students from different universities. However, currently each Canadian program has its own evaluation protocol and clinical educators must learn several different tools. The Canadian Academic Coordinators of Clinical Education in Communication Sciences and Disorders are about to begin a project to develop a common evaluation tool that would be used for students in all programs. Hopefully this will ease the workload for clinical educators that are supervising students from more than one program.

#### 6. Encouraging Students to Participate in Practicum Placements Outside the Immediate Vicinity of the University Program

The universities and professional associations could lobby appropriate government agencies and/or solicit donations from alumni and community groups to provide accommodation bursaries and stipends to assist students to travel further afield for their placements. Much has been written about the shortage of practicum placements, but I have the impression that if students were willing or able to travel for their placements, this problem would be alleviated significantly. It would also remove some of the responsibility from clinicians in cities where university programs are located.

#### 7. Reviewing Clinical Hours Requirements

Sometimes clinical educators are under pressure to provide particular experiences with certain disorder areas in order for students to meet the clinical hours requirements of professional associations and regulatory bodies. Less attention to these specific hours requirements might provide for greater flexibility and enable students to take advantage of unique opportunities that would enhance their professional preparation.

Our clinical educators make an invaluable contribution to the preparation of the next generation of professionals. The universities and professional associations need to continue to solicit input from clinical educators on ways in which their participation in this process can be facilitated and supported.

*We all have a responsibility to help our students and professions grow and we all have skills to offer. CASLPA encourages more of its members to engage in this experience. Consider supervising a student. If you are interested in becoming a clinical supervisor, contact the clinical educator at one of our nine university programs to volunteer. Know of a great clinical supervisor? Consider nominating them for the CASLPA Mentorship Award.*

## 2005 AWARD WINNERS

*And the CASLPA award goes to .....*

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Dr. Andrée Durieux-Smith

#### **Eve Kassirer Award for Outstanding Professional Achievement**

Megan M. Hodge

#### **Mentorship Award**

Judith Robillard Shultz

#### **Editor's Award**

Jason Sirianni

#### **Consumer Advocacy Award**

Anthony Intas

#### **Promotions Award**

First Words Preschool Speech and Language Program of Ottawa

#### **CASLPA Certification Exam Award**

##### **Audiology**

Ariane Laplante-Lévesque

##### **Speech-Language Pathology**

Inbal Weisz

#### **Student Excellence Award Winners**

##### **University of British Columbia:**

Julie Lewis (S-LP)  
Emily Goodman (Aud.)

##### **University of Alberta:**

Anna Sytsanko (S-LP)

##### **University of Western Ontario:**

Heather Thompson (S-LP)  
Citasha Sunney (Aud.)

##### **University of Toronto:**

Nicole Rioux (S-LP)

##### **McGill University:**

Debbie Hughes (S-LP)

##### **University of Ottawa:**

Marie-Claude Hamel (S-LP)  
Chantale Melanson (Aud.)

##### **Université de Montreal:**

Audrey Boivin (S-LP)  
Jonathan Côté (Aud.)

##### **Dalhousie University:**

Jennifer O'Donnell (S-LP)  
Rachelle Zral (Aud.)

##### **Université Laval:**

Marie-Ève Lafleur (S-LP)

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