

COMPASS

The Newsletter for the Association of Private Practice Therapists

APPT E-List

If you have e-mail access from home, work or both, but aren't on the APPT E-List, you're missing out!

The latest addition to the E-List is information on upcoming workshops and events. Many of these workshops offer discounts for multiple registrations. The E-List allows you to contact other private practice therapists to register together and take advantage of savings up to \$50.

Join the E-List and receive legislative updates and first notification of upcoming APPT events. And it's a great way to stay connected with other private practice therapists!

If you are a current APPT member, you are eligible to join the E-List. We just need your e-mail address to sign you up!

Call Bridget at (402) 393-4600 with your e-mail address, or send an e-mail to appt@ibc.omhcoxmail.com (subject: APPT Member E-List). You will receive an e-mail confirming your addition to the E-List.

Election of Officers

Elections were held at the APPT Spring Conference on Friday, April 8. Newly-elected officers for the Association of Private Practice Therapists (APPT) are:

- President: Glen Fineman, LCSW (Associated Counseling Professionals)
- President-Elect: Greg Tvrdik, MS (West Center Psychologists and Psychotherapists)
- Past-President: Bob Atherton, MS (Pacific Counseling Associates)
- Secretary: Mark Ziegenbein, MA (Therapy Resource Associates)
- Treasurer: Julie Luzarraga, LCSW (The Women and Family Health Cooperative)
- Members-at-Large: Ellie Fields, MS and Kay Kronholm, MS

Spring Conference Covers 'Medication Management'

Today's private practice therapists must keep on top of a dizzying array of psychotropic medications. Helping to educate therapists about these medications at the APPT Spring Conference in April were two prominent psychiatrists: Dr. Judith Stoewe (addressing medications and their effect on children and adolescents) and Dr. Michael Sedlacek (who talked about the adult component of medication management).

Dr. Stoewe detailed the changes in medications during her career, which began as a nurse. In particular, she noted the progression of treatment of depression from insulin shock therapy to psychotherapy to today's antidepressant medications. She noted in particular that, at one time, it was believed that children could not be depressed because they "lacked the ego (capacity) to be depressed."

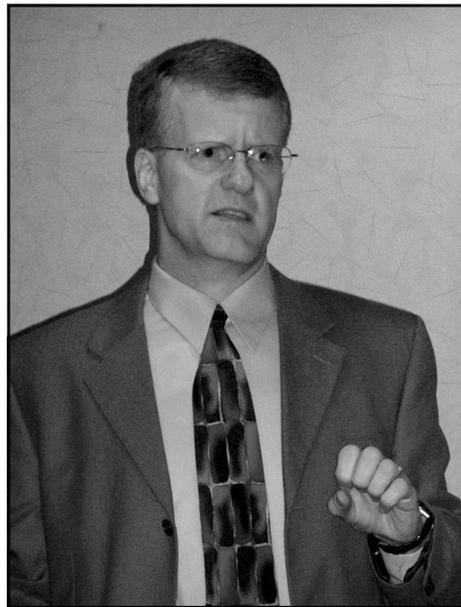
In 1987, she said, Prozac was introduced, the first widely prescribed psychotropic medication. It seemed that "every physician was prescribing it — under the impression that Prozac was as safe as candy."

Today's problems with psychotropic medications are that many of these medications are being prescribed inappropriately, or with the wrong diagnosis.

"It feels like everyone in the medical community is prescribing for children and adolescents," she noted. "Who is prescribing is important."

She also stressed the importance of making the correct diagnosis. "There can be many reasons for a child's symptoms."

Building on Dr. Stoewe's presentation, Dr. Sedlacek outlined "The Art of Psychopharmacology" in his talk, delving into the nuts and bolts of pharmacotherapeutics. He discussed the differences between long duration medications (like Prozac, with a duration of 4-5 weeks) versus short duration



Dr. Sedlacek

meds (such as Xanax, with a duration of 3-4 hours), and the resulting effects on clients. He also outlined the principle of "bioavailability" and how the medication's half-life can affect absorption.

Dr. Sedlacek also described the "STEPS" analysis system: determining the right medication based on Safety, Tolerability (chronic and progressive versus situational), Efficacy, Price, and Simplicity (one pill per day increases patient compliance versus multiple pills required). He also provided an overview of numerous new medications on the market.



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Bob Atherton – President of APPT

From the President's Desk

Wow! That year went by quickly!

Just 12 months ago, I took the reins of the association, with some lofty goals in mind. It's hard to believe that this is my last column as your association's president.

Learning Opportunities

One of the greatest strengths of the organization is our delivery of learning opportunities that offer clinical and/or practice management guidance. Your APPT board works to develop a mix of topics which will appeal to the multidisciplinary makeup of our organization, and they delivered a strong programming lineup in the past year.

We sponsored mini-series workshops on topics as diverse as "Employment Strategies" and "Internet Addiction" and heard from therapist-members as well as from individuals representing community resources.

We also sponsored a training workshop last year, titled, "You've Been Served: What to Do When You've Been Subpoenaed," with Kristine Gates of the Erickson & Sederstrom Law Office. This workshop helped therapists understand the legal process as it relates to mental health therapy. We continue to look for other legal-related

topics that might be of interest to our membership.

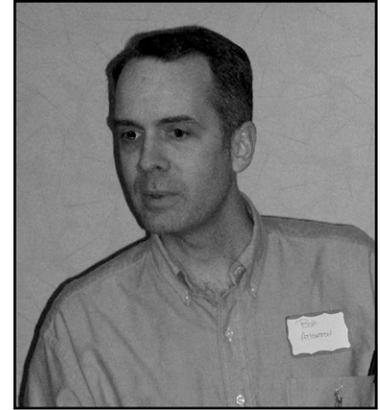
Our recent Spring Conference featured two outstanding presentations from psychiatrists, Dr. Judith Stoewe and Dr. Michael Sedlacek, talking about "Medication Management." This is a topic that we can't learn too much about.

Reaching Our Goals

My number one priority for my term was increasing our membership — and I'm happy to report that while we didn't reach my personal goal of 140 new members, we came close at several times throughout the year! The final count was 134, a significant increase over the 120 average from just a year ago.

Our primary source of new members is referrals from you, our existing association members. Tell your colleagues about APPT — or bring them along to one of our workshops or conferences!

We've also been successful in spreading the word among student organizations. It's encouraging to see the next generation of private practice therapists get excited about the opportunities that are ahead of them.



Bob Atherton

We've had a number of our student members join us for our Mini-Series workshops, and they welcome the advice and insight that veteran private practice therapists offer.

Our success as an organization depends on our influence — the more members we have, the better our programming, member benefits, and networking opportunities.

Thank you for your support of me throughout the past year — and for your support of the organization. Together we can be a positive force for our industry, and for our clients.

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Article submissions are welcome. Call for deadlines for member submissions.

Submissions may be edited for content, clarity and/or length. Subscriber comments are welcome.

Editor Bridget (Weide) Brooks
 Publisher/Newsletter Advisor Bob Atherton

Subscription to *The Compass* is a benefit of membership in APPT. Write or call if you have questions about membership.

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★ Private Practice Opportunity ★

Associated Counseling Professionals, an established group practice in West Omaha is seeking an experienced licensed psychologist or therapist to take the place of Janell Weeks, MS, LMHP, who is moving out of the Omaha area.

Possible partnership opportunity.

Call Rita at 334-1122

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 Omaha, NE 68144
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Up to \$100 Scholarship Available For Continuing Education

We've had several therapists take advantage of the APPT continuing education scholarships — and we will have four scholarships available in 2005. If you see a session you're interested in attending — and want to get a little financial help (and give back to the association at the same time!), then we've got an offer that you won't want to miss out on!

The APPT Scholarship for Continuing Education is designed to help APPT members defray the cost of a workshop they attend (75 percent of the cost of the workshop, up to a maximum of \$100).

Complete the scholarship application form and submit it along with a copy of the workshop brochure (if available). Up to four scholarships are awarded each year.

Your scholarship request will be reviewed by the APPT Scholarship Committee and you will be notified of their decision within 10 days of your application.

If selected, you will be reimbursed for the awarded amount after attending the workshop and sharing the information with APPT members, either through a presentation or by writing an article for *The Compass* summarizing the content of the workshop.

Questions? Call Pam Feldman at (402) 334-1122.

Application for APPT Scholarship For Continuing Education

Name _____

Practice Location _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

Conference Title and Location (please attach a copy of brochure, if available)

Date: _____ Cost: _____

I am willing to:

- Present a brief summary of the workshop at a mini-practice workshop
- Write an article for *The Compass* summarizing the content of the workshop.

Please note: The maximum amount awarded is 75 percent of the cost of the workshop, up to \$100. If selected, you will be reimbursed the awarded amount after attending the workshop and sharing the information with APPT members through a presentation or article.

Submit completed application to: Pam Feldman, LPC, 12818 Augusta Avenue, Omaha, NE 68144 or fax to (402) 334-8171. Applications will be considered and a decision reached within 10 days of receiving your application.



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NOT A MEMBER? JOIN TODAY!

Join the Association of Private Practice Therapists and You'll Receive EVERY Issue of The Compass, Plus These Other Membership Benefits:

- **Membership Directory.** This directory is circulated to members and the media as well as to community groups who use it to make referrals.
- **Networking Opportunities.** Join us for our annual conferences (Spring and Fall) as well as social get-togethers and practice management mini-series workshops. Low-cost CEUs available!
- **Free Legal Consultation with Erickson & Sederstrom P.C.** Attorneys at Law (free initial consultation of up to one hour; APPT discount on further services). Call the APPT office at 402-393-4600 for details!

MEMBERSHIP TYPE (all memberships are individual memberships):

- Traditional (private practice therapist); dues equal to your fee for one hour of therapy
- Agency (employed by a non-profit agency); dues are \$25/year
- Affiliate (retired or non-practicing therapist or academician); dues are \$25/year
- Student (currently enrolled); dues are \$25/year

Therapist Name _____

Practice/Group Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home No. _____ Work No. _____

Fax No. _____ E-mail _____

State Senator Name _____ District No. _____

Professional Affiliation: Counseling Social Work Psychology Psychiatry Marriage & Family

My Practice is: Full-time Part-time Not in private practice at present

DUES (See Membership Type, above) \$ _____

Voluntary Donation for Legislative Action \$ _____

TOTAL \$ _____

Please enclose your check, payable to APPT

Mail to: APPT
PO Box 241621
Omaha, NE 68124-5621

Questions? Call Bridget at 402-393-4600

Legislative Update: Appropriations Study; Timely Claims Processing

The Appropriations Committee voted to include \$50,000 from the Health Care Cash Fund for FY 2006 to conduct a provider rate re-basing study of the cost of providing behavioral health services for the Health and Human Services System.

The study may use sampling methods to conduct the analysis. The sampling should account for differences in the types of services delivered as well as other factors that may impact service delivery and cost, including, but not limited to, geographic location. Results of the study shall be shared with the Legislature's Appropriations Committee. The committee also voted final approval in the budget of the 3% and 2-1/2% behavioral health provider rate increases, as we have discussed.

The re-basing study will go a long way in establishing a rate setting system for providers that is a part of the HHS budget submitted to the Governor prior to the start of each biennium budget cycle which has been

an important part of our legislative agenda.

These rate increases, and the money for the re-basing rate study, were not originally included in the Governor's budget and therefore could be a potential targets as we get into the budget debate on the floor of the Legislature. The Appropriations Committee budget bill will be printed early next week and the bill will be reported to General File sometime later in the week.

We must be diligent about making sure this money stays in the budget as other groups begin work to find funds for their projects. The biggest new fund request will come from the business community in the form of tax incentives. We know they will be asking for substantial support that will not be included in the Appropriations Committee budget bill because the details of their business incentive proposal have not been worked out yet.

LB 389, the Health Care Prompt Payment Act, passed in the Legislature. This bill

provides that third party payors must pay, deny or settle clean claims within 30 days for claims submitted electronically and 45 days for claims not submitted electronically.

A clean claim does not include a claim for which the insurer needs additional information to resolve issues concerning coverage or eligibility, issues concerning coordination of benefits, investigation of preexisting conditions, subrogation, determination of medical necessity, or the use of unlisted procedural codes.

The committee amendments that were adopted to this bill also provide that the act does not apply to policies that provide coverage for a specific disease, accident-only coverage or other limited benefit coverage, hospital indemnity coverage, disability income coverage, Medicare supplement coverage, and long-term care coverage.

— Reported by Aubrianna Faustman
American Communications Group, Inc.

Fighting Office Scams in Your Private Practice Office

You wouldn't think that private practice offices would be a target of fraud, but the reality is, any small business is vulnerable. You can protect your finances by recognizing some of the most common scams in circulation today.

Office Supply Scams

Ever get a phone call from someone about the toner for your copy machine or computer printer? This is the top office supply scam, and it's been around since the late 1970s.

The most popular deception is the "toner phoner," where a scam artist calls a company and poses as a legitimate supplier. Popular lines might include: "There's a price increase on your toner products, but since we failed to notify you, we'll give you your old price if you order today" or "Because of a shipping error, we have a surplus product in our warehouse and can offer it to you at a lower price rather than ship it back to the factory."

The caller will then quiz you on the printers, copiers, fax machines, and multi-functional machines you have. Armed with

this information, the scam artist ships an after-market substitute product and invoices the company almost 10 times the real price, plus excessive shipping and handling charges.

This tried-and-true scam works because some therapists will be unaware of the true costs of the consumable toner supplies they usually buy, and will be too embarrassed to return the items when they prove to be inferior and overpriced. Con artists will send as many invoices as it takes to get paid, usually marked with messages such as "past due" or "balance still due on your account."

Another supply scam is the "phony invoice." In this scam, a supply company ships unordered products — such as toner, paper, or light bulbs — to a business, along with a bill for goods or services. The con artist will usually set up this scam by acquiring the name of a legitimate employee, making it appear as if the supplies were ordered by the employee.

Along the same lines is the "phony freebies" scam. A company calls and asks an employee to accept a free gift. The low-value "gift" is then followed by unordered office

supplies addressed to the employer, along with a bill.

Technology Scams

E-mail is an increasingly large source of scams, and not just the consumer ones you see in the news, where people disclose their bank account information in order to help a "Nigerian prince" re-acquire a lost fortune.

Scammers are also operating as spammers, sending organizations e-mails for phony software. These are often easy to spot because of low product prices and misspellings in the message or subject line. The software is often a low quality or imitation product, and you could be inviting legal trouble by purchasing it.

Another scam involves letters alerting businesses that their web site domain is expiring soon. The message includes an ad that looks like an invoice to renew the domain, but what it really does is switch the domain name to a costlier register.

There have also been cases of web service scams, where a company calls claiming

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Address Service Requested

Protect Yourself From Office Scams

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to provide free web design and hosting services, usually with a free month trial. Whether the service is authorized from then on or not, they bill for the services through phone bills or false invoices. A company could end up paying unauthorized charges for months before noticing.

Advertising Scams

Private practice therapists should also be aware of deceptive advertising that might lead to ordering a product or service that is overpriced or isn't needed. Marketers sometimes send out warnings and inserts via official-looking envelopes.

These can range from companies that inform a company that their labor law posters are out of date, or they can appear to be legitimate invoices for Yellow Pages or other directory listings. Sometimes the statement "This is not an invoice" is printed on these items, but often it's in small print that cannot be easily seen.

The best way to protect yourself is education and awareness. Talk to your office staff about keeping an eye out for these scams. Only order supplies when you originate the phone call to the supplier. Don't give out makes and models of office equipment over the phone, and be wary of calls asking for the name of the office manager. Scam art-

ists will use this information later when posting as a legitimate supplier or for addressing phony shipments.

Keep a suppliers list in a convenient spot by the telephone so employees can double check the status of a vendor when they call. Don't be pressured into making quick decisions. Con artists often use high-pressure sales tactics in the hopes of getting you to say "Yes."

Finally, remember that if you receive unordered merchandise, you not only don't have to pay for it, you also don't have to return it.

— Source: *Office Solutions Magazine*,
May/June 2005

Free Legal Consultation. Remember, each APPT member is entitled to a free legal consultation with an attorney from Erickson & Sederstrom, P.C. (up to one hour) per year. Call Chuck Sederstrom, attorney at law at (402) 397-2200.

If you access this service, please give us feedback. Call Bridget at the APPT Office at (402) 393-4600 and let us know!