

TRAINING IN EVIDENCE-BASED
PSYCHOLOGY AT THE MASTER'S LEVEL

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A PRESSING NEED

- The number of Master's level mental health practitioners is very high
 - 635,000 counselors and 595,000 social workers vs. 152,000 psychologists in the U.S.
- Increasingly, mental health services are being delivered by non-doctoral level practitioners, especially in rural or low-income areas

Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor

A PRESSING NEED

- These mental health practitioners spend a shorter amount of time in school and doing supervised clinical work, but most are able to perform therapy independently
 - A smaller number can also do independent psych evaluations
- Unfortunately, relatively few Master's MHP are trained in evidence-based psychology, despite the evidence for its efficacy

A PROPOSED MODEL

- To effectively train Master's students in EBP, particularly the behavioral and cognitive therapies, requires a different, more focused model of training
- The presented model is based on a 60-hour program (the most common in US for obtaining Master's licensure)

A PROPOSED MODEL

- There are four key aspects to EBP training at the Master's level
 1. Course content
 2. Course sequence
 3. Clinical experience
 4. Supervision

COURSE CONTENT

- The most crucial aspect of EBP training in a short period of time is focusing on empirically backed therapies or assessment extensively
- This can mean that some more traditional, but non-evidence-based methods get left by the wayside (e.g., projective tests, non-CBT therapies)
- This also means a focus on clinical skills in courses where they might not be as emphasized (such as Psychopathology)

COURSE CONTENT

- Teaching skills quickly means a need for opportunities to practice those things learned in-class *as they are learned*
 - Using “practice” clients for assessment courses to administer, score, and interpret results
 - Having volunteers be “clients” for early therapy classes to practice interviewing and rapport-building skills
 - Having real clients available during later therapy classes, to implement and get feedback on specific techniques

COURSE SEQUENCE

- Proper course sequence is critical when training EBP, as each clinical course should build upon the previous course for optimal efficiency
- This includes preparing students adequately in the classroom for practicum and internship experiences prior to such experiences

CLINICAL EXPERIENCE

- Obtaining the *proper* kind of clinical experience while in training is essential
- This means working under supervisors trained in EBP, at facilities supportive and encouraging of EBP
- This can often be the largest struggle, especially when finding external placements

SUPERVISION

- Conducting EBP supervision, focusing on skill attainment and demonstration, is another challenging but vital aspect of this model
- While control can be exercised over in-house supervision via having faculty members trained in EBP, external placements or internships need to be carefully screened and chosen

YEAR ONE - COURSES

- First semester
 - Psychopathology
 - Experimental design
 - Psychological Tests & Measurements
 - Non-clinical elective (Developmental)
- Second semester
 - Psychotherapy Theories & Techniques
 - Ethics & Professional Development
 - Cognitive Assessment
 - Non-clinical elective (Learning)

YEAR ONE - CONTENT

- Psychopath – focus not only on common disorders, but also clinical interviewing skills for those disorders
- Experimental – places emphasis on evaluating literature and how to determine effectiveness of therapy/assessment techniques
- T&M – measures of psychopathology, adaptive functioning, and development

YEAR ONE - CONTENT

- Psychotherapy – Overview of schools of therapy, with emphasis on empirical support (or lack thereof) for their methods
 - Combine with a practice “client” to build interview and rapport skills
- Cognitive assessment – intellectual, academic, memory, and language tests

YEAR TWO - COURSES

- First semester
 - Cognitive & Behavioral Therapies
 - Cultural & Gender Diversity
 - Personality Assessment
 - Non-clinical elective (Biological)
- Second semester
 - Group Therapy
 - Advanced Therapy & Application
 - Elective/seminar (Career counseling, school services)
 - Non-clinical elective (Psychopharmacology)

YEAR TWO - CONTENT

- CBT – overview of C & B theory, case conceptualization, and specific techniques
 - Combine with real client to foster development of therapeutic skills
- Personality assessment – focus on empirically supported measures, such as MMPI, PAI, NEO-PI, and clinical applications

YEAR TWO - CONTENT

- Advanced Therapy – application of specific CBT techniques to specific disorders (anxiety, mood, behavioral, etc.)
 - Combine with real client(s) to foster development of therapeutic skills
- Group therapy – focus on evidence-based interventions (e.g, for social skills, anger management, etc.) and their delivery

YEAR THREE - COURSES

- First semester
 - Practicum
 - Child & Adolescent Therapy
- Second semester
 - Practicum
 - Couples & Family Therapy

YEAR THREE - CONTENT

- Practicum
 - Every effort should be made to have both onsite and institutional supervisors trained in EBP
 - Weekly supervision with both is recommended, as well as open communication between supervisors
 - Early focus on case conceptualization and treatment planning

CHALLENGES

- Faculty who are not themselves trained in EBP
- A large amount of material to cover in a short amount of time
- Lack of good external placements that have EBP supervisors

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

- The first three graduates of a 45-hour program designed in similar manner are now seeking licensure in Arkansas
- Feedback from their internship supervisors was overwhelmingly positive
 - Seen as more well-prepared than other students at similar training level; having better therapy/assessment skills
- The focus in courses and practicum on specific skills and high levels of feedback on those skills paid off!

CONCLUSIONS

- Training in EBP can be done at the Master's level, but requires huge amount of coordination between
 - Faculty members to make sure content is proper
 - Administration to make sure courses are sequenced and available when needed
 - Universities and external placements to ensure empirical onsite supervision
- It will, however, pay off for the students, their clients, and society at large
