

CANADIAN  
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## Scientific Affairs Committee Report

March, 2008

The Scientific Affairs Committee (SAC) has been working on a number of projects since our fall teleconference in October.

A number of suggestions were provided to the Convention Committee including: (a) organizing a SAC-Sponsored Workshop or Conversation Session (e.g., a grants writing workshop for new faculty members); (b) working to increase basic science in our conference program; and, (c) putting together a workshop on how to interact with the media. We have been thinking about strategies for increasing public awareness of the importance of psychological science.

In December, 2007, Dr. Henny Westra represented SAC at the Neuroscience Canada meeting. The symposium was a follow-up to a series of stakeholder consultations and a report on how to “best create the public policy framework needed to support research into neurological and psychiatric diseases and their impact”. Dr. Westra's summary is appended to this report.

Drs. Ken Craig, Christine Chambers and Wolfgang Linden have also drafted a letter to CIHR re: the Randomized Clinical Trials committee. Concerns were raised about explicit and implicit assumptions and practices in CIHR terms of reference and decisions of peer review committees responsible for adjudicating randomized clinical trials examining psychological and social interventions for health conditions. The main argument is that we need to ensure that review panels will not have difficulty understanding unique features of experimental design dictated by behavioural and social interventions and that decisions will not be dominated by parties focusing upon the requirements of trials that emphasize pharmacological or medical interventions.

The SAC also responded to the Draft Report of the Experts Committee for Human Research Participant Protection in Canada (*Moving Ahead*). Much of this is summarized in my last *Psynopsis* column; however, I would be happy to circulate our response to interested board members.

A CPA member contacted me in January, 2008, regarding my description in *Psynopsis* about the most pressing priorities for the SAC. Two were identified: promoting a culture within the CPA supporting all dimensions of basic and applied research and to work to increase funding to support university-based research. This CPA member correctly pointed out that the second goal was in contradiction to the first in that restricting the emphasis to increase university-based research does not promote a culture supporting all dimensions of basic and applied research (e.g., hospital-based researchers).

I acknowledged the concerns that my *Psynopsis* column (and the way that the strategic goals are listed for Science) restricts the emphasis to university-based research and does not explicitly support research conducted by hospital psychologists and hospital-based research institutes. I noted that the SAC certainly had no intention of exclusivity. Although I do believe that our objectives are functionally the same (i.e., to increase research funding for basic and applied psychological science) I was apologetic that this objective was misstated (perhaps my own mental set had been such that I had always subsumed university- and hospital-based research under the same umbrella). I also proposed a number of ways to rectify this situation:

1. ensure that the objective stated in strategic plan for the SAC is changed to be more inclusive;
2. include representation from hospital-based researchers on the SAC; and

3. writing a *Psynopsis* column on the breadth of settings where psychological research is undertaken and address the diversity of settings where psychologists do research.

SAC has also worked to update a letter that may be used as a template for CPA members to write to parliament re: funding for Social Sciences and Humanities. The SAC also responded to Dr. Catherine Lee's request for input regarding SSHRC's current eligibility requirements for the CGS-MA awards.

Finally, on behalf of the SAC, I participated on the Fellowships and Awards Committees.

Respectfully submitted,  
David J. A. Dozois  
Chair