

# Teaching & Researching Remotely

## A reflection on our panel discussion from the CPA 2020 Convention

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." - Maya Angelou

I had the opportunity to facilitate a roundtable discussion on remote teaching and researching as a part of our section programming for this past summer's virtual CPA convention. Many thanks to the discussants, Dr. José Domene (University of Calgary), Dr. Ada Sinacore (McGill University), and Dr. Jessica Van Vliet (University of Alberta) for sharing their wisdom, experiential learning and for being willing to identify the real challenges we have and are facing in our remote work environments. As the discussion unfolded, participants shared their experiences of shifting to remote teaching and research, as well as their plans for how to navigate this new reality for the 2020–2021 academic year. Some of the keywords or phrases that describe the essence of the roundtable discussion were as follows:

- Flexibility
- Creativity
- Resilience
- Mourning and grief
- Workload
- Calling attention to disparities
- Forcing needed change
- Diversity
- Reassurance
- Caring
- Opportunity

Though anecdotal, these keywords reflect the laboured, thoughtful and conscientious ways in which the discussants modelled reflective practice in their response to the shifts in our work realities. What is perhaps not reflected in this content summary is the collegiality that was expressed. Although the knowledge I gained from participating in this discussion was invaluable in shaping and planning my teaching and research for the Fall 2020 semester, it was the experience of the session that remains most prominent in my memory. In a professional world that was beginning to feel increasingly isolated, coming together to tell our stories as counselling psychologists from across Canada provided a juxtaposed experience of connectedness. I see this experience reflected in my own research on dyadic and collective efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Brosseau et al., 2020). Bandura (1997) defined collective efficacy as “a group's shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainments” (p. 477). The ability to meet together with colleagues for the purpose of sharing experiences and generating new ideas provided me with a sense of being ‘in it together’. However ephemeral our joint task was, I left feeling refreshed and encouraged in my work. In a time where we and our students are experiencing increased physical isolation, when we cannot connect in the conference lobby or after a session to catch up and debrief, it is all the more important to find new ways to maintain a sense of connected community. It is my hope that my experience will serve as a reminder and an encouragement for each of us to continue to nurture and expand our community of counselling psychologists here in Canada.

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#### References

- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York, NY: W. H. Freeman and Company.
- Brosseau, Braeken, Carmack, Rosberger, & Körner. (2020). We think we can: Development of the Dyadic Efficacy Scale for Cancer (DESC). Manuscript submitted for publication.

# SUPERVISION

## In The Post-Pandemic World

A reflection on our panel discussion from  
the CPA 2020 Convention

Payden Spowart

Perhaps a hopeful title, I had the wonderful opportunity to chair the online discussion Supervision in the Post-pandemic World at the 2020 CPA Virtual Convention this past summer. We brought together the shared expertise and knowledge of Drs. Jeff Chang, Tanya Mudry, and Kevin Wallace, Ms. (although now, Dr.) Emily Williams for a roundtable discussion. We considered how the pandemic and the move to providing counselling and supervision through electronic means (e.g., Zoom and telephone meetings) influenced experiences of practicums, internships, and meaningful work in our practice. As supervisors and students, we discussed considerations and plans for the upcoming academic year and how to prepare students and future professionals for remote practice and future face-to-face work. Across the panel, several themes emerged that I wanted to highlight.

First, there was a general agreement that some positives have and could continue to emerge as the result of moving to remote sessions. Such sessions have allowed for more opportunities for live supervision, as the supervisor could “sit-in” on sessions with their camera off. This technology could also be leveraged to provide supervision and counselling services to more remotely located individuals, thus opening up new doors.

Second, there was a recognition that multiple challenges existed. Supervisees may be encountering additional anxieties and stressors which require acknowledgement and support. Supervision contracts, detailing, for example, the purpose, goals, and objectives; context of service; method of evaluation; duties, roles, and responsibilities; the scope of competence; procedural considerations; and terms of the contract (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019), seemed more important than ever. Also, there was a recognition that supervisees

could be missing out on the “day-to-day happenings” of a workplace that contribute to their professional development. This could be important to build in to ensure a more well-rounded training opportunity. We also spoke about the difficulties associated with evaluation, support, and remediation, particularly around subtle or nuanced happenings. Finally, there was a discussion that this is uncharted territory – we are doing our best to adapt to changing times. It is important to model and engage in our own self-care and encourage our supervisees to do the same.

Finally, there was a recognition that it is important to keep up with ethical considerations, practice guidelines, and relevant telepsychology training (e.g., continuing education credits). Furthermore, now, more than ever, it seems that the training in clinical supervision is important given the additional complexities that our role has.

Taken together, there have been changes to some of the process of and experiences related to supervision. We hope that students and supervisors alike can work together to help ensure quality service delivery and positive learning experiences.

Bernard, J. M., & Goodyear, R. K. (2019). *Fundamentals of clinical supervision* (6th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

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# Transitioning to Counselling Practice at a Distance

Summary of our panel discussion  
from the 2020 CPA Annual Convention

Houyuan Luo

On July 27, 2020, the CPA Counselling Psychology section organized a panel titled “Transitioning to Counselling Practice at a Distance” for CPA annual convention. The panel was conducted at a distance as well. Panellists include Drs. Houyuan Luo, Janet Miller and Terilyn Pott.

During this panel, each panellist shared their experiences and perspectives on providing virtual psychological services to clients since the pandemic started.

First, the panellists discussed what the transition was like for each of them. Transitions were generally smooth, although it was a learning curve with a slight discomfort being in the beginning and enjoying it one month or two into the virtual sessions. Some clients still prefer in-person sessions but are becoming more open to it. Some concerns they have include privacy issues and difficulty in developing an alliance. Some unique challenges are noted for international students, because many of them are doing on-line courses out of Canada or out of a province where the psychologists are legally allowed to practice psychology.

Then, the panellists shared what are some of the great things and not that great things about providing virtual sessions. For example, panellists noted that virtual sessions significantly improved access to psychology services for clients usually wouldn't have access to, such as those residing in rural areas, having health issues, and being severely depressed. Some clients may also feel less stigmatized when doing virtual sessions because they don't need to see a physical office, which may strongly associate with stigma. Moreover, virtual sessions allow psychologists to view clients in their own space, which may reveal much information that is not available if it is in-person.

Challenges-wise, panellists commented that the work-life boundaries could be blurred when working from home as we do those two things in the same place; it is easy to work over-time and feel like they never finish work. Some strategies panellists have taken include designating a specific room only for work, or if living in condos/apartments, designate an area or desk only for work, put on leisure clothes right after work and so on. Panellists also shared some unexpected incidents during virtual sessions, such as children's interruptions, digital equipment overheating/stops working, environmental noise, animal presence, etc. Being open and communicable are the keys to overcome those hurdles.

A very important issue is the management of a potential crisis situation virtually. It may feel daunting to think about managing crisis intervention virtually, but it is actually doable. Panellists have shared some strategies they have been practicing; they include ask clients to provide an accurate physical location, alternate contact information (e.g., cell number), and emergency contact information. Also, the clients are always informed of necessary steps psychologists need to take if a crisis arises.

Last, panellists shared that they are willing to keep virtual sessions, at least to some degree, as part of their regular practice after the pandemic because they have hands-on experience of its benefits.

Dr. Houyuan Luo completed his Ph.D. in Counselling Psychology from University of Alberta. He is a registered psychologist in Ontario and is working in private practice. He is currently serving as a Member-at-Large on the Counselling Psychology Section Executive.