

Making Connections:

How to Thrive when Professionally Isolated in Interdisciplinary Health Systems

Networking

Sylvia Malcore, Ph.D.

Clinical health psychologists can face a unique challenge in healthcare organizations when they are embedded in specialty clinics as the only behavioral health specialist. There may be other behavioral health providers in the organization, but day to day contact is rare. There are multiple avenues for connecting with other psychologists.

Consultation/Coordination of Care: Understanding and knowing what other behavioral health services are offered at the organization can assist patients with coordination of care and identifying appropriate services. This may be especially useful for complex patient populations in which an individual may benefit from different types of behavioral health services.

Communication tools: Tap into communication tools your organization already offers, such as: secure messaging systems, electronic medical record, instant messaging.

Building Relationships: Explore informal ways to connect with psychologists. Are there social hours offered by organization or outside groups (e.g., State Psychological Association)?

Committees/Program Development: Psychologists may be playing roles in multiple committees in the organization such as: IRB, ethics, quality improvement. It can be especially fruitful to have psychologists “voice at the table” and connect with other behavioral health providers in the medical setting.

Cross Sectional Leadership/Mentorship: Identify psychology leadership to promote and advocate for challenges and psychology specific needs (e.g. RVU differences among providers, physician status). Identify the opportunities for division meetings for organizing, training, and advocating for psychologists. Furthermore, mentorship can be useful at any stage of career development. Identifying behavioral health providers who can continue to foster our growth and development can be useful especially when psychologists are at risk of working in isolation.

Advocating for Psychology

Sabrina Esbitt, Ph.D.

Advocating for psychology's home in medicine builds on our skills and expertise as psychologists. Evidence is necessary for that advocacy, but not sufficient. We need to organize our clinic or ward community around psychology's contributions to interdisciplinary healthcare teams. Some suggestions:

Get to know people. From the security guards to the clinic director. Gather information--the joys of practice, the struggles, favorite patients, feared patient encounters, their hopes for the future--for themselves and for the team/clinic. See how you can engage those challenges, hopes, and dreams via psychology. Create SMART goals around those community-driven integration needs, feed those back to your stakeholders, and advocate for that.

Take successive action. Identify low hanging fruit that meets your community's needs (and that you can reasonably offer given your own resources). This could be offering workshops, journal clubs, coaching/shadowing, specialty case consultation, baliant/joy of practice/process groups, or collaborating on QI or other scholarly initiatives. You will enhance your integration in your community and open the doors for identifying and building towards successively more complex and impactful goals.

Be generous. Look for ways to expand collaboration and authorship in scholarly projects. Do not start and end your collaboration with team members with advanced degrees. Use your group skills to bring teams together and build opportunities for mutual professional development and recognition.

Mentorship

Josh Wiley, Ph.D.

Not everyone wants a mentor, even if everyone could probably use one. But you do. So how do you cultivate one

Don't choose a stranger. Think about people you know, people you've worked alongside, people who know your work, people you admire, and people who understand you and your experience. You'll have a lot more success if you start with people you look up to.

Know what you need. Start with what you know and drill down to what you don't. Focus on that. You need to show that you're willing to do the work, not waste time.

Do a test run. Before you ask someone to mentor you, start by asking them if they'll give you advice on something small. Those results will go a long way toward showing you what to expect from them as a mentor.

Ask for what you need... eventually. Don't overestimate your abilities, but do lead with a reasonable benefit to the mentor. What do you have to offer? A common understanding of shared goals and mutual benefits goes a long way.

Follow-up. Don't drop the ball, don't get cold feet, and don't disappear.

Finding a Professional Home

Paul Korte, Ph.D.

It is vital to find colleagues with which to collaborate and consult regarding daily work activities and area of specialty. We rely on work colleagues and peers, but often times information from outside our immediate work environment is invaluable in advancing our skills and career.

JOIN! There is an overabundance of professional organizations to choose from based on a profession, specialty area, or type of work setting. Joining a niche organization provides a cohesive group that focuses exclusively on a given interest area and can provide a wealth of information and consultation.

Get Involved Engagement helps to reap the benefits of membership. Organizations are constantly looking for volunteers to contribute to the mission. A little bit of courage to say, "I'm interested" is a huge step in learning more and meeting more colleagues who share in the same kind of work.

Contribute The "Imposter Syndrome" is real and we can easily find someone whom we feel is more expert than us. However, sharing our own expertise and experience may help others in their quest for information.

Finding a professional home is enriching as the organization becomes filled with familiar faces and trusted information. Conference attendance solidifies the sense of belonging and is a great excuse to travel across the country!

Interested in becoming more involved in Society for Health Psychology?

Become a member!

- Join at the APA website
- Access to *Health Psychology* and The Health Psychologist newsletter
- Eligible for SfHP Awards programs
- Access to Listserv discussion groups and job boards

Get involved in leadership

The Early Career Professionals Council serves as a landing ground for people within 10 years of receiving their terminal degree interested in leadership in SfHP. You will be matched with available leadership opportunities and provided with mentoring in your leadership roles. Email Elizabeth Seng, Ph.D., EPCP chair directly if you are interested: Elizabeth.Seng@einstein.yu.edu

Join a Special Interest Group!

- Integrated Primary Care SIG
- Pain SIG
- Women's Health SIG
- Propose a new SIG!

Find Mentoring: Health Psych Connections

Want a low-stakes opportunity to receive mentoring for a specific issue related to health psychology? Through the connections program, you will be matched with another SfHP member with relevant expertise. Connections have been made around: professional development, job search strategies, developing health psychology training programs, journal reviewing, research design, syllabus planning, and tenure.