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## Introduction: Reprioritizing the Role of Science in a Realistic Version of the Scientist-Practitioner Model



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This series of articles attempts to redefine and reprioritize the role of science in search for a clinically meaningful and realistic version of the scientist-practitioner (S-P) model. To this end, science is discussed as both research-driven practice and clinically meaningful research, keeping practitioners and their needs in the center of attention. In this process, common problems in the actualization of the S-P model are discussed, and potential solutions are offered. © 2002 Wiley Periodicals, Inc. *J Clin Psychol* 58: 1195–1197, 2002.

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Since its inception 50 years ago (Raimy, 1950), the scientist-practitioner (S-P) model of training and practice has received considerable attention (Benjamin & Baker, 2000; Beutler, 2000a; Hayes, Barlow, & Nelson-Gray, 1999; Pepinsky & Pepinsky, 1954; Peterson, 1997; Trierweiler & Stricker, 1998). Despite the fact that the S-P model remains the dominant training philosophy in therapeutic psychology (O'Sullivan & Quevillon, 1992; Thelen & Ewing, 1970), extensive discussion has been devoted in the past decades to addressing the gap between science and practice (Barlow, 1981; Soldz & McCullough, 2000; Talley, Strupp, & Butler, 1994). A good deal of this discussion has focused on the lack of research involvement on the part of clinicians and the lack of communication between researchers and practitioners (Talley et al., 1994). However, we argue that the underutilization of empirical evidence in everyday clinical activity (Beutler, 2000b; Cohen, Sargent, & Sechrest, 1986; Cullari, 1996; Morrow-Bradley & Elliott, 1986) has been one of the most alarming observations. For example, in a recent survey by Cullari (1996) only a small percentage of practicing psychologists reported carrying out formal outcome

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evaluations (11%), or conduct any client satisfaction surveys (20%), and only one third believes that psychotherapy is research-driven. This special series place a high priority on these issues for successful implementation of the S-P model.

Our goal is to redefine and reprioritize the role of science in search for a realistic version of the S-P model. Such a version will consider all aspects of science and practice taking into account the problems that have been reported in implementation and actualization of the S-P model. This special series is structured according to a twofold conceptualization of science in the S-P model as (a) evidence-based practice and (b) clinically meaningful research. Thus, the S-P model will be discussed in terms of the following.

*Science as research-driven clinical practice.* This aspect of the S-P model addresses evidence-based clinical practice. Considering that (a) the majority of professional psychologists are primarily practitioners and (b) any clinical research is pointless if existing empirical evidence is not utilized by clinicians, research-guided practice becomes the single most important role of science in the S-P model. Observed problems in several domains of scientific practice include inadequate consumption of the empirical literature in treatment selection and application, lack of systematic treatment process and outcome evaluation, and difficulties with the use of a methodological/scientific way of clinical thinking and decision making (Beutler, 2000b; Cohen et al., 1986; Cullari, 1996; Meier, 1999; Morrow-Bradley & Elliott, 1986; Spengler, Strohmer, Dixon, & Shivy, 1995).

*Science as clinically relevant research.* This aspect of the S-P model is a secondary objective which should be the focus of practicing psychologists only after they have achieved the successful implementation of evidence-based practice. The kind of research that can be expected from psychologists who are primarily practitioners should be also reexamined, taking into consideration the particular disadvantages and difficulties of such practitioner-initiated research. Psychologists who are primarily functioning as researchers should also stay in touch with clinical reality that will allow and stimulate them to conduct clinically important research. The collaboration of researchers and practitioners in research projects of mutual interest also seems essential in bridging the communication gap between practice and research.

Participants in this special series are scientist-practitioners who draw upon their work and experience to discuss how research and conceptual developments in the field of psychotherapy can be applied effectively in a realistic and clinically meaningful version of the S-P model. The majority of the articles are based on a relevant symposium on scientific practice presented at the 2000 Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association in Washington, D.C., as well as an open discussion on practitioner-initiated research presented at the 2000 Annual Meeting of the Society for Psychotherapy Research in Chicago, Illinois. Thus, this special series addresses the S-P model from primarily the practitioner point of view, a much needed perspective in the S-P model discussion.

The first three articles focus on science as empirical practice and how to improve it. Beutler, Moleiro, and Talebi present the latest developments on how practitioners can utilize the empirical literature in client assessment and systematic treatment selection, based on empirically derived transtheoretical principles. Asay, Lambert, Gregersen, and Goates discuss user-friendly and cutting-edge scientific methods that clinicians can use to measure psychotherapy outcome in private practice for the purpose of enhancing treatment effects. Lampropoulos, Spengler, Dixon, and Nicholas argue that psychotherapy integration is necessary and can enhance all S-P clinical activities, advocating for a *transtheoretical/integrative/eclectic* consumption of empirical literature, assessment and diagnosis, hypothesis formation and testing, generation of alternative hypotheses, case formulation, treatment selection and application, and continuous process and outcome evaluation.

The two remaining articles are oriented toward clinical research. Research by practitioners is explored in an edited paper by Lampropoulos, Goldfried, Castonguay, Lambert, Stiles, and Nestoros, who respond to a common question regarding advantages/benefits, difficulties/problems, and solutions/suggestions for practitioner-initiated research. Next, based on a discussion of the cognitive activity and the types of information that clinicians value, Lueger presents four approaches to clinically relevant research that researchers could follow to bridge the gap between research and practice. Stricker and Carter, both well-known and experienced scientist-practitioners, conclude the series with their commentaries. It is worth noting that, not only have all contributions in this special series have been developed with the practitioner in mind, but they are also characterized by transtheoretical/integrative qualities which make them applicable to practitioners of all orientations.

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