NEUROPSYCHOLOGY MOCK INTERVIEW WORKSHOP: PRACTICE MAKES A PERFECT INTERVIEW

PRESENTED BY:
THE SOCIETY FOR CLINICAL NEUROPSYCHOLOGY
THE ASSOCIATION OF NEUROPSYCHOLOGY STUDENTS IN TRAINING

WORKSHOP AIMS
1. To increase your understanding on how to present and conduct yourself during and after a professional interview.
2. To improve interview skills via practice with real-time feedback from clinical neuropsychologists.

WORKSHOP TIMELINE

12:00 - 12:05 pm = Session Welcome
12:05 - 12:45 pm = Presentation, Cady Block, ANST Chair
12:45 - 1:15 pm = First working group session
   SWITCH SPEAKERS
1:15 - 1:45 pm = Second working group session
1:45 - 1:50 pm = Session Close

THANKS TO OUR SPEAKERS

NEIL PLISKIN, PH.D.
Director, Neuropsychology Service
Director, Neurobehavior Program
University of Illinois – Chicago

LAURA DREER, PH.D.
Director, Mental Health/Neuropsychological Services
Department of Ophthalmology
University of Alabama – Birmingham

CELIANE REY-CASSERLY, PH.D.
Director, Neuropsychology Program
Children’s Hospital of Boston

INTERNSHIP A LONG WAY OFF?

• Focus on making yourself a successful graduate student!
  o Be organized and thoughtful in how you approach your graduate training.
  o Finish that thesis and dissertation!
  o Be proactive in seeking out feedback from as many sources as possible.
  o Work to build and maintain those important mentor relationships.

ALWAYS BE ONE STEP AHEAD

• To be the most successful at each step of your training path AND during internship/postdoc applications, be mindful of the requirements of the next step.
• Knowing what makes a competitive neuropsychology internship candidate can help to guide your training, i.e., meeting or exceeding the type and amount of training experiences.
• A great resource: The Houston Guidelines
THE HOUSTON GUIDELINES

- At the internship level, trainees must devote at least 50% of a 1-year full-time APA/CPA-approved training program to neuropsychology training. In addition, at least 20% of the training experience must be devoted to General Clinical Training.
- There are additional specifications at the postdoctoral level as well.
- Students in other specialties should consult with their APA Division and/or other professional organization.

GUIDE LINE RECOMMENDATIONS

- KNOWLEDGE BASE:
  - General psychology courses (e.g., stats)
  - General clinical courses (e.g., psychopathology)
  - Brain-behavior courses (e.g., functional neuroanatomy)
  - Foundations of clinical neuropsychology (e.g., assessment)
- SKILLS:
  - Assessment
  - Treatment and interventions
  - Consultation
  - Research
  - Teaching and supervision

MODEL OF INTEGRATED EDUCATION & TRAINING IN CLINICAL NP

- These figures demonstrate how specialty knowledge and skills (i.e., the horizontal dimension) are acquired at various levels of training (i.e., the vertical dimension).
- Person A achieved a greater acquisition of knowledge and skills during their DOCTORAL work.
- Person B achieved a greater acquisition of knowledge and skills during their INTERNSHIP/RESIDENCY.

DATA FOR 2012-2013 MATCH

Knowing the typical characteristics of successfully matched applicants can also guide you during the internship/postdoc application and interview process.

- HOW MANY SITES OFFER MAJORS IN NP:
  - 170 Adult, 76 Child
- HOW MANY SITES OFFER MINORS IN NP:
  - 366 Adult, 227 Child
- HOW MANY SHOULD I APPLY TO:
  - According to data provided by APPIC, applying to more than 15 internships did not appear to increase the chances of being matched. They recommend to apply to between 11 and 15 sites

DATA FOR 2011 MATCH

- NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS: 16.0
- NUMBER OF SITES RANKED: 6.8
- NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS: 6.4
- MEDIAN INTERVENTION HOURS: 573
- MEDIAN ASSESSMENT HOURS: 148
- MEDIAN SUPERVISION HOURS: 303

INTERNERSHIP SELECTION CRITERIA

Supervisors of 50 clinical neuropsychology internships were asked to rank order criteria used for selecting intern applicants.

- Survey method
- 40 responses (80% response rate)
- Reflects “aspirational” criteria

## SUPERVISOR RANK-ORDERED CRITICAL ITEMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RANK ORDER</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Clinical Experience - Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>NP Specialization within Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Interview/Interpersonal Characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Letters of Recommendation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Personal Statement (Goals/Interests)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Pubs/Presentations (research competence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Clinical Experience - Psychotherapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Familiarity with Applicants Supervisor(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Work Sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>GPA</td>
</tr>
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</table>

## PREFERRED NP TRAINING EXPERIENCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONSIDERED ESSENTIAL OR VERY IMPORTANT</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clinical NP patients</td>
<td>97.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neurology</td>
<td>95.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychiatry</td>
<td>77.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical Psych patients</td>
<td>72.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical/health patients</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling patients</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive rehab patients</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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## DESIRED SETTING EXPERIENCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RANK ORDER</th>
<th>Setting</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>University Medical Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>VA Medical Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Community Hospital or Clinic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Private Rehab Facility</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Private Practice</td>
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## PRIOR ASSESSMENT EXPERIENCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONSIDERED ESSENTIAL OR VERY IMPORTANT</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NP Assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible/Functional Systems</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixed</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality Assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>90.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projective</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational/Functional Assessment</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
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## EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONSIDERED ESSENTIAL OR VERY IMPORTANT</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dissertation Proposed</td>
<td>92.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NP Faculty/Supervisors</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NP Recommendation Letters</td>
<td>85.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division 40 Curriculum</td>
<td>82.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissertation Completed</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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## PRIOR RESEARCH ACTIVITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONSIDERED ESSENTIAL OR VERY IMPORTANT</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pub – Refereed Journal</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pres – National Conference</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INS</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAN</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APA Division 40</td>
<td>45.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**OTHER INFORMATION SOURCES**

- Fellow students, interns, ANST members
- Yearly progress checks with your advisor(s)
- APAGS internship workbook
- APA convention programming
- SCN/ANST conference programming
- SCN/ANST websites
- Training site brochures
- AITCHN website
- APPCN website

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**THE INTERVIEW**

- Many applicants think of the entire process as daunting, and are apprehensive about interviews because they are so focused on the potential evaluative aspect.

- **REFRAME YOUR PERCEPTION:**
  - By attending this workshop, you are already increasing your odds of matching.
  - Interviews can actually be fun because, like a conference, it’s a chance to visit new cities, network, meet new people, and hear about new research.
  - If you scored an interview, chances are the program already thinks you are qualified so all you need to do is convince them that your experiences, interests, and personality are a match.
  - Keep your focus on fit.

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**FIRST THINGS FIRST**

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**WHAT ARE INTERVIEWS LIKE?**

- INTERVIEWS CAN VARY QUITE A BIT:
  - Some sites use the interview as a chance to get to know you, while some see the interview as your opportunity to find out about them.
  - Warm/fuzzy vs. businesslike/professional
  - Mostly individual, but sometimes group interviews.

- TYPICAL SCHEDULE:
  - Program orientation, usually first thing in the morning.
  - A tour of the facility
  - Faculty interviews with the training director and several additional faculty members who may or may not be in your area of interest.
  - Lunch, often used as a chance to talk to current trainees.
  - All in all, it can be a long day – usually from 8:00 am until 3:00 to 5:00 pm.
WHAT SHOULD I WEAR?

- DON’T TRY TO BE A FASHIONISTA:
  - Always play it safe and conservative for interviews.
  - You want to be able to stand out based upon your application and professionalism, not your fashion sense.

- GENTLEMEN:
  - Wear a suit with matching socks.

- LADIES:
  - Wear a pantsuit, or skirt-suit, with pantyhose or trouser socks.

- EVERYONE:
  - Wear comfortable walking shoes.

WHAT SHOULD I BRING?

- BRING A FEW COPIES OF YOUR CV:
  - Interviewers probably won’t ask to see it, but be ready in case they do.

- TAKE NOTES:
  - Perfectly fine for the interview, recommended for any orientation or presentations.

- BRING GUM OR MINTS:
  - Sometimes interviews take place after lunch.

- BRING A BOTTLE OF WATER AND A HEALTHY SNACK:
  - Just in case you need a little something to keep you fueled and ready.

DON’T FORGET YOUR MANNERS

- BE ON TIME:
  - You can only make one first impression.
  - Allow yourself time to find the program, park, and locate the interview room.

- BE POLITE:
  - Stand up and shake hands.
  - Say thank you.
  - Wait to sit down, and ask where.
  - Make sure your cell phone is turned off and put away.
  - Extend your respect and professionalism to trainees and program staff as well.

VERBAL BEHAVIOR

- Don’t: Interrupt others, ask blunt questions, and/or use curse words or slang. Avoid the use of annoying “filler” phrases such as “like,” “um,” “uh,” “you know.” Do not complain to, ignore, or avoid the interns – treat them as you would any faculty member. And by all means, never speak ill of any past mentors, colleagues, or interviews!

- Do: Be polite and gracious at all times. Enunciate your words clearly, use proper English and proper terminology, and wait for your turn to speak. It is also okay to exhibit an (appropriate) sense of humor. Just take cues from your interviewer and let them set the pace and tone of the interview.

NON-VERBAL BEHAVIOR

- Don’t: Fidget, look bored, roll your eyes, play with your hair, grimace/smirk/sneer, and/or sigh loudly. You think we’re joking here but these kinds of things are observed by interviewers and trainees all the time! Another thing is to try to avoid looking tired on interviewers. Try to appear energetic and excited to be there for the interview...exhaustion can always be misinterpreted as disinterest or boredom.

- Do: Use gesturing appropriately and otherwise keep your hands clasped in front of you, use good eye contact, and sit up straight. Even when you don’t feel like it and especially when you are tired, indicate interest by leaning forward slightly and use other non-verbals like head nodding. Last but not least, a good smile always goes a long way when meeting others!

TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

- Try as much as possible to attend your interviews in-person.

- If you do a telephone interview, prepare for it the same as you would an in-person interview:
  - Review your notes beforehand.
  - Yes, wear your suit.
  - People can hear a smile!
  - Sit at a table (not in bed).
  - Find a quiet place where you will not be interrupted.
Interview questions can be grouped into a number of categories:

- Personal
- Research
- Supervision
- Clinical training
- Neuropsychology
- Professional Issues

**Personal Questions**

- How did you become interested ________?
- What are your personal strengths and weaknesses? How do they influence your work? What have you done to deal with your shortcomings?
- What do you do in your spare time? To relax? Hobbies?
- What are your goals during internship? After internship? In 5 years?
- Who have you met with so far today? Who do you still have to meet with today?

**Research Questions**

- What are your research interests and how have they evolved? Where do you see your research interests going in the future?
- Tell me about your publications.
- Specific questions regarding dissertation and thesis:
  - Tell me about it?
  - How is it progressing?
  - When will you defend?
  - What are your expected findings?
  - Some interviewers will get very specific about your research. Be sure you know your work.

**Supervision Questions**

- What sort of supervisors have you had? What type of supervision is best for you? What is most challenging? Why?
- What were the orientations of the supervisors you’ve had?
- Describe the best and worst supervision experiences you have had.
- What is your style in providing supervision?
- What would you like to get out of supervision?
- What do you need in supervision now for your theoretical development?

**Clinical Questions**

- What are your strengths as a therapist? What do you perceive are your areas to further develop or weaknesses?
- Orientation in therapy? What do you think of _____ approach?
- Talk about a therapy case you had. How did you conceptualize the case? What was most effective?
- Talk about the most difficult/challenging case you had. Why was it difficult? How did you handle it? What did you learn from it? What do you wish you had done differently?
- Some sites provide a case background and ask you to conceptualize and provide a treatment plan.

**Neuropsych Questions**

- Tell me how you got interested in neuropsychology.
- What kinds of neuropsychological populations have you worked with?
- What is your approach to assessment?
- If you had to pick 1 “go to” test, what would you pick and why?
- What types of reports have you written?
- Some sites provide a sample case with data and ask you to come to a diagnosis/differential diagnoses.
PROFESSIONAL QUESTIONS

• Describe an ethical dilemma you’ve had, how you attempted to resolve it, and how the situation turned out.
• How have you matured over time as a professional?
• Tell me about your experiences working with diverse populations? What kinds have you worked with, and how has it impacted your work (both general clinical and assessment)?

TAKE POST-INTERVIEW NOTES

• As soon as you leave the interview, jot down your impressions so you can remember details when ranking sites later on:
  o Your impression of the environment.
  o Your impression of the program.
  o What you liked or didn’t like about it.
  o Who you might want to work with.
  o How the trainees seemed (e.g., their typical schedule, tired, energetic, happy, frustrated, ambivalent).
  o Any remaining questions and contact information on who to ask.

POST-INTERVIEW FOLLOW-UP

• Finally, consider sending thank-you notes or e-mails to the internship director and others who interviewed you – although this is certainly not necessary or expected.
• Always pay attention during the interview in case the site explicitly asks you NOT to send a thank-you note.
• If you do send a note, reiterate your interest in the site and that you appreciated the chance to meet with the director, but make sure not to mention where you have put the site in your Match rankings.
• A good way to follow-up is to ask any additional questions you might think of, but remember to make it a good question (that cannot be found in the brochure).