

# The CLINICIAN

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The Newsletter of the New York State Society for Clinical Social Work, Inc. • A Founding Member of the Clinical Social Work Federation

## To Tell or Not To Tell

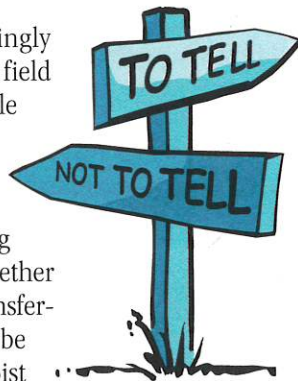
*Does Answering Personal Questions Cut Short Important Learning Opportunities for the Client?*

*By Jane S. Hall, CSW, BCD*

In the present climate of relational and intersubjective approaches to psychoanalytic psychotherapy, the classical stance of abstinence, neutrality and anonymity of the therapist is being challenged. The caricature of the silent, balding psychiatrist sitting behind the couch with pad and pen in New Yorker cartoons perpetuates a myth.

Today women are increasingly taking the forefront in the field and neither male nor female psychotherapists seem to need the austere surroundings once de rigueur in the profession. That being said, the question of whether self-disclosure inhibits transference fantasies must be addressed. Does the therapist risk losing an important avenue to the unconscious by answering questions? How does the therapist protect the patient's right to wonder and to see where the wondering leads? The question: "Where are you going?" before vacations is a common one. Some therapists tell; others ask for the fantasy. What goes into that decision?

Separations between patient and therapist are crucial times in terms of deepening psychoanalytically based work. Such times evoke memories of past separations



in the patient's life – times that always have a valence of pain. Every patient I have worked with, every case I have supervised or consulted on has impressed me by how deeply separations are felt. If these feelings are not recognized and interpreted, reactions to separations (often unconscious at first) can herald the end of therapy.

For therapists who take time off in August, the Memorial Day weekend is time to start listening for separation themes and references. July 4th is another holiday that sets off feelings about the August break. Questions about the therapist's destination are natural and they are an important opportunity to explain the value of questions. A patient's curiosity provides a good opening for the therapist to explain the idea of fantasy and to

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### LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

## Licensing, YES. Mandated Physician Referral, NO.

*By Marsha Wineburgh, DSW, Committee Chair*

The Board of the New York State Society for Clinical Social Work stands firm in its commitment to pass a licensing bill for clinical social workers, the largest of the mental health professions, but only a bill that does not undermine our current practice autonomy. As of the last week of May, we have seen no new draft legislation to license the social work profession in the state. Consequently, there is no evidence to date that either the state or city chapter of NASW has dropped the mandated physician referral language, which was in their draft as of the second week in May.

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# Executive Report

By Helen Hinckley Krackow, CSW, BCD, Society President

I find myself writing to you in a difficult period. We have been called on as a profession to meet terrible psychological devastation this winter — devastation for our clients and ourselves. How does a clinician comfort a morgue worker at the World Trade Center who has been sifting through body parts day after day? The worst part for him is dealing with the bodies of babies and struggling with profound depression and the pervasive feeling that life is evil. The worst part for us is to know that all we can do is listen.

We need to appreciate the new stresses we are under. War and violence have shattered the sense of safety and security. Clinical social workers will be dealing with the fallout for many years to come. Now more than ever before we need to seek support from the values and ethics of our profession and fight together to secure ourselves. We not only need education in various types of trauma work, we also need to come together with each other to share our experiences and discuss how to survive the traumatization that takes place listening to our clients' reports of trauma. This is why we changed

our Annual Meeting to "Compassionate Fatigue," a meeting to help our members process the personal stress generated by terrorism. The fall will bring us a wonderful joint conference of the State Society and the New York University School of Social Work entitled, "The World a Year Later." It will take place on September 21.

It is also important for us to continue to hone our clinical skills in areas other than trauma. In a few weeks we will attend the annual conference entitled, "Collaborative Dialogue: The Clinical Process." These conferences are wonderful gifts designed for us by us. Thanks to all the contributors and creators.

We are hopeful of the passage of a licensing bill that will not include mandatory referral of the seriously mentally ill to physicians. Thanks to all of you who have written to our legislators

and made calls objecting to the inclusion of this requirement.

Let us hope that out of all that has been asked of us in these past few months we will gain in personal and professional growth. ■

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## The CLINICIAN

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## NYSSCSW

We are pleased to announce  
the election of  
State Society Past President

**Allen A. Du Mont** CSW, BCD  
to the post of  
**President Elect**

of the  
**Clinical Social Work Federation.**

He will take office as  
President in July 2004.

# Vendorship & Managed Care

COMMITTEE REPORT

By Alice Garfinkel, ACSW, DCSW, Chair

The Vendorship & Managed Care Committee (VMCC) continues to function as a support for Society members in their dealings with managed care and third party payers. We assist members with difficulties in payment, or delayed payment. We also help members obtain continued authorizations for patients, enroll or disenroll from panels, resolve dilemmas about confidentiality and answer Medicare questions.

## Opening New Markets:

### Self-Insured/Self-Funded Companies

The VMCC also markets to self-insured companies that do not recognize clinical social workers for independent reimbursement for mental health services. Our efforts have been successful: Pepsico, Ford Motor Credit and Unisys Corporation now have clinical social workers on their panels of mental health providers! We continue to market Daimler-Chrysler, Sun Chemical, The Mark Hotels, Bedford School District, Nova Care, IIT Research Company and Chemed Corporation.

## Recent News

UBH's contract states that if you are contracted with them as a provider and see a patient with UBH who has exhausted his/her benefits, you must see the patient for the negotiated UBH rate and cannot renegotiate a new (higher) fee. I spoke to Bruce Condit, Network Associate for NYS Contracts, who has confirmed that this clause was in the contract. He also thinks it has been in past contracts. Helen Hinckley Krackow, Society President, plans to write a letter of protest.

The VMCC is instrumental in helping Society members learn how to address problems and know who to contact for advocacy, and this often makes the difference between resolution and victimization.

If you have similar problems or want more information, please call your VMCC representative or:

- Alice Garfinkel
- 917-424-3545 or 718-352-0038

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## Medicare Clinical Social Worker 2002 Fee Schedule\*

EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2002

CODE	DESCRIPTION	LOCALITIES (see below)			
		1	2	3	4
90804A)	Individual Psychotherapy (20-30 min.)	\$56.74	\$54.68	\$49.72	\$53.95
90806A)	Individual Psychotherapy (45-50 min.)	84.56	81.53	74.33	80.46
90808A)	Individual Psychotherapy (75-80 min.)	124.92	120.61	109.94	119.03
90801A)	Psychiatric Diagnostic Interview	127.70	123.08	112.20	121.49
90846A)	Family Psychotherapy (without pt)	82.94	79.97	72.92	78.94
90847A)	Family Psychotherapy (cojoint)	99.45	95.94	87.49	94.70
90853A)	Group Psychotherapy	30.82	29.53	26.75	29.12

### LOCALITIES

1. Manhattan
2. Brooklyn, Bronx, Westchester, Richmond, Rockland, Nassau and Suffolk Counties
3. Putman, Sullivan, Orange, Dutchess, Ulster, Columbia, Delaware and Greene Counties
4. Queens County

**\*EDITOR'S NOTE:**  
As a result of a production error in the Winter issue, the fees listed in this chart were incorrect. This is the correct fee schedule. We regret previous misprints.

# Endings and Beginnings

## *A Therapeutic Framework*

Adrienne Lampert, CSW

This article is taken from an address by Adrienne Lampert, CSW, past president of the Brooklyn Chapter, at a chapter event held in April in her honor. Adrienne is also past president of the State Society and the Clinical Social Work Federation.

It is very special for me to be presenting you, my friends and colleagues, my thoughts and feelings about personal and client trauma – in addition to celebrating Adrienne Lampert. For many years I have had the philosophy that the celebration of the self and others is a most important ingredient for the well being of all. Too often we are critical, judgmental and impatient with others and ourselves. What better time than this moment to take stock of where one is in this difficult and threatening period. The startling and stark awareness that we are no longer safe has been a rude awakening for all. We all feel more vulnerable.

I would like to start by telling you of my wake up call. It is Tuesday, September 11, 2001, 8:45 a.m. I am teeing off at the fourth hole at Dyker Golf Course, hoping to hit the ball a mile. I hit, follow through and see this very dark cloud in the beautiful blue sky. "That must be quite a fire," I say to my group. They look, shrug their shoulders and someone comments, "Maybe something in Bay Ridge is burning up." By the fifth hole, the cloud is bigger and many more are forming. My comment is, "It looks like all the firemen in Bay Ridge are on holiday." They giggle. By the sixth hole, a man comes riding out to announce, "The World Trade Center has been hit by an airplane."

I think I asked him "What?" four or five times. The simple words made no sense to me. My pals repeated to me what he said, but I just could not understand. I felt confused, very irritable and very uncomfortable. Finally, I understood. "Oh my God, the World Trade Center was attacked." I felt frightened and immediately decided I had to go home. I was amazed that only six of the 40 players decided to leave. Their comments were incredible to me: "You know what is going on. Finish the golf round. What can you do anyway?"

On the drive home, I was angry, critical and dismayed with these reactions. Finally home, I became glued to the TV set. I watched, cried and cursed a lot. The feeling of helplessness was overwhelming. As a woman, a wife, a mother, and a psychotherapist, I have

not often allowed myself to recognize my helplessness. This illusion of omnipotence and my vain attempts to assume ultimate responsibility often interferes with my own growth and the growth of others. I always knew this, but at this moment it truly hit home. I started calling clients who worked in the World Trade Center area. Fortunately, no one was killed, but all had experiences that were difficult and painful. We were supportive to each other.

On September 12, I had sessions with eight clients. Three were directly involved in the attack, the rest only indirectly, through TV and conversations with friends and family. One client was filled with guilt and fear. A physician, he was heading into the World Trade Center at the time, but was told to leave. He knew something

terrible was happening but did not know or care what it was. He only wanted to run. The next thing he knew he was on the Brooklyn Bridge. He looked back just as the first tower collapsed. He ran even faster. Later he thought, "I am a physician. So many people were hurt and I did

**"The World Trade Center has been hit by an airplane." I think I asked him "What?" four or five times. The simple words made no sense to me.**

not stay to help." He cried; he accused himself of being a waste, a loser, a sissy. With quiet listening on my part, he quieted down and recalled an early experience with his dad, who had called him similar names when they would go out camping. We later agreed that his choice to run from the buildings had been wise. He wanted to live, do his work, and being frightened of the situation showed good sense.

Adrienne has a private practice in psychodynamic psychotherapy. She can be reached at 116 Cascadilla Street, Ithaca, NY 14850. Cell phone: 607-227-3033.

Another client, a not very likeable woman, who often complains life sucks and is chronically overwhelmed, reported being in the second tower at the time of the attack. She saw the planes go around the building but was unable to leave the window. A colleague grabbed and pushed her to the door and stairs. She got out safely and only stopped running when she came to the West Side Highway.

At this point in the session, she started crying, pulling her hair and shaking. I took her in my arms and we rocked for about five minutes before she could gain control. This was an unusual action on my part; however, my concern for her and myself was overwhelming and hugging seemed the right way to go. Since this session, she has become more open and trusting, more in touch with her abusive childhood and more able to gain a perspective on her role as a victim, one which has resulted in very shaky interpersonal relationships within her family and others.

The third client, a most respected, dedicated, high power computer exec, did not go to work on September 11. Suffering with a headache and depressed after a typical, unresolved fight with her husband, she had decided to stay home. Thirty-eight people in her office were killed. Her guilt was palpable. "I should have been there. I could have helped. Maybe I should have been the one who died."

Usually, her biggest defenses in handling both personal and professional problems have been to acknowledge, analyze and ignore or solve the difficulty. She cannot allow for any feelings, and has suffered with psychic numbing and emotional anesthesia for most of her life. The September 11 experience has caused nightmares, depression and agitation. Our work has become more alive and she is more involved.

Finally, one client, aged 84, an educated, politically involved woman, was unusually quiet for the first few minutes of the session. Then she blurted out, "You will have no respect for me. Do you know what I did when I heard about the World Trade Center yesterday? I played bridge at the club until 5:00 p.m." I must admit I was surprised, but felt relieved to be able to say, without feeling critical, "We all have our own ways of handling crises and trauma." I was thankful that I could understand.

But I was still puzzled about my reaction on the golf

course. Why was it that I could not understand the words, "The World Trade Center has been hit by an airplane." Simple words, clear words, but I had felt I was hearing a foreign language.

Finally, I realized this experience of not understanding was like one I had long ago. At age 4 1/2, before leaving for school, I went to see my mother, who had a heart condition, to kiss her goodbye. I bent over the bed and kissed her, and noticed that her skin was black and blue. She did not wake. I went around the bed to wake my dad. He looked at her and started screaming. I crawled into a corner. Alone, frightened, watching my world crumble, and wondering, does anyone know I'm here? What's happening?

I remember later, in Grandpa's piano store, running around and playing every piano. How long after the incident that was, I do not know, or when I was told she died. But, be assured, I have spent many an hour "on the couch" trying to understand what was not understandable.

Before September 11, 40 years into my professional career, I made the decision to leave Brooklyn and move to Ithaca, where our daughter lives. I intend to continue my practice, and to play golf and look forward to new experiences. However, you must realize from my earlier report the trauma of saying goodbye. I have 27 hours of active practice a week with clients ranging in age from 16 to 84, and I feel blessed with my good fortune

in being a psychotherapist and having so many good clients whom I have helped and who have taught me so much. Now I had to leave my clients, none of whom I have known for less than a year, and some of whom I have known for 20 years.

It was so easy to get distracted with selling the house, packing, looking for another house, that I found myself postponing telling clients about my impending move. It was very clear I wanted to hold on, not say goodbye and just hoped I did not have to deal with any of the feelings on my

part or theirs. This was impossible, so six weeks before I stopping my practice, I told each client. Why six weeks, I do not know. I do know that this experience is filled with a multitude of feelings on the part of the therapist and the client.

**On September 12, I had sessions with eight clients. Three were directly involved in the attack, the rest only indirectly. We were supportive to each other.**

**Finally, I realized this experience of not understanding was like one I had long ago, at age 4 1/2**

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## To Tell or Not To Tell

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Jane S. Hall,  
author of  
*"Deepening the  
Treatment" is in  
private practice  
in New York City.*

support the patient's capacity for self-reflection. Every therapist has heard different versions of the following words:

"How can I have thoughts or feelings about you? I know nothing about you. If only I knew if you had children or were married or were ever divorced or used drugs or liked to cook or went to movies — then maybe I could trust that you'd understand me."

Therapists often have difficulty not answering personal questions because they see this as depriving the patient

and possibly damaging the alliance. My experience has taught me that once this therapeutic attitude of not answering questions is explained logically, the patient feels safer and the treatment deepens. There are always exceptions to every guideline because each patient is unique and because different

clinical situations require different responses. The stance of benevolent curiosity, however, usually saves the therapist from making uninformed decisions. Helping a patient wonder about her curiosity is usually far more giving than diminishing that curiosity with information.

When a patient asks me a personal question I explain, with utmost tact, that questions are very important to the work of understanding, but that answering personal questions or giving personal opinions would cut short an important learning opportunity. The opportunity is the patient's fantasy about the answer. I say something like: "Your questions are very important to me and in a different setting it would be polite to answer. Here, we want to learn about your thoughts and feelings. Your questions about me are valuable ways to explore them. It would be easy for me to answer but in doing so I would be depriving

you of a chance to wonder about and to picture me any way you want to." Such an explanation is basically reassuring to a patient. It says to her that there are boundaries, that this is not a social situation where politeness is required, and that her therapist is interested in helping her reflect. Said early in treatment it helps educate the patient about how the work is done.

Because patients often need to deny the separateness of the therapist as their caretakers denied their separate-

ness, the therapist's vacation is particularly distressing. The patient is faced with the irrefutable fact that she does not and cannot control the therapist and that the therapist has a separate life.

■ ■ ■

In the first year of treatment, Sally pictured me on an island with only books for pleasure on my vacation. The next summer she added a dog to the picture. At the

end of our work she gave me a family. Water skiing replaced reading as issues of object loss, separation, envy, jealousy and oedipal rivalry entered the treatment and were worked on. Taking away Sally's opportunity for fantasy by giving her facts would have deprived her of the chance to work at her own pace. As inner

self and object representations are softened the patient's ability to see the therapist as separate increases.

There are some patients who cannot seem to tolerate a therapist's non-disclosing stance and it is at these times and with these patients that clinical judgment, common sense and experience must guide us. Mrs. Q suffered from severe separation anxiety that seriously disrupted her functioning. She was able to maintain her stability by bringing an atlas to sessions prior to the vacation break. Tracing my travel route was her solution and I respected this autonomous idea.

It may seem like a minor point but if the therapist starts sharing personal information, how, when and where does she draw the line? Telling a patient a little can be tantalizing. As if one says: "Take a peek but only a peek." My preference is to give the patient the space to explore in fantasy where I go. Of course,

there are exceptions. With a fragile patient who might be wounded rather than helped by not getting an answer the therapist might say something like: "I will answer your question but can you work with it first? This way we will learn more than if I answer you quickly. Then, if you still feel that my answering will be helpful, I will."

A different kind of challenge appeared in the context of a bicycle accident I had many years ago while on

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**There are some patients who cannot seem to tolerate a therapist's non-disclosing stance and it is at these times and with these patients that clinical judgment, common sense and experience must guide us.**

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## To Tell or Not To Tell

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vacation. When I came back to work limping and with a black eye I felt that my patients deserved an explanation so I told them what had happened. One patient said "Likely story! Your husband probably did it." This was said with a laugh but we were able to use her 'joke' to tap into her anger at my absence and at my husband who she imagined as her rival for my attention. Some therapists might have chosen to wait for the patient's reactions. My self-disclosure in this case had roots in my unconscious. My need to explain overshadowed their right to imagine. Anytime the therapist makes a decision to disclose personal information it is most helpful if she analyzes her decision. The point is that there is no absolutely correct way for the therapist to be in the myriad situations that come up when working analytically — except to understand as best she can what motivates her and to preserve the frame whenever possible.

How many of us have never answered a personal question? Therapists who do psychoanalytic work

understand the idea of abstinence but because we learn best by experience most of us have answered a personal question or been tempted to offer advice. What we learn is that rather than help the patient trust, these answers often do the opposite. If the therapist answers one question, why would the patient not expect all questions, or at least most, to be answered? If the therapist offers advice and the patient chooses not to take it, guilt, embarrassment, and shame may result. Answering questions takes away the patient's right to wonder and to explore her own fantasies. I have heard patients ask the questions and then reassure me that they really don't want me to answer.

Despite the current debate on 'self-disclosure' with some therapists advocating the sharing of personal information and others preferring a more traditional approach, it seems that if the therapist understands and respects the patient's right to imagine, she will protect that right as best she can. ■

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## Endings and Beginnings

### A Therapeutic Framework

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The immediate reactions were, "You gotta do what you gotta do," "That's interesting," "I hope you will be happy," "Are you sick?" "I will save a lot of money," "Good, I won't have to come any more," "I knew this would happen, you are an old lady," "Why did you wait so long to tell me," and on and on. Was I surprised? Yes and no. I had some insight into the fact that each client would react in a way that was based both on our relationship and their own history. The announcement has, in many cases, increased the intensity of sessions, with much praise for all I have done for them. On the other hand was, "This therapy stuff really helps very little," and avoidance, anger, more formality toward me and bracing up to the separation. Soon after the announcement, four or five clients who never missed appointments cancelled or did not show up. Others ignored the announcement. Others assured me that they would not continue in therapy and others just wanted to know who I was referring them to and were they like me.

Many post-announcement sessions have been helpful and great learning experiences for all. My own reaction has been mixed. I struggle with the goodbyes. I really like my clients. The idea that they will no longer be a part of my life is a loss. I have shared some of my feelings with them and found it to be fruitful. I have shared that we have worked hard together; I will be available

until the end of April and yes, there are other very good therapists. I have needed to probe my feelings and reactions about goodbyes regularly. It has not been easy.

I am in awe of the process of psychotherapy — how much I have learned from my own personal and group therapy experience. In saying goodbye to you, first I will miss you and Ithaca is just around the corner. I appreciate all you have shared with me and I look forward to our continued friendship and association. Thank you. Let us celebrate. The future is now.

In conclusion, I received a card from a client that reads:

*Cautiously... We break the silence, nervous, unsure of ourselves... wondering what will happen next... gently... We touch, gathering strength from one another... knowing that everything will be all right.*

And she wrote the following:

Adrienne:

*I have taken many journeys with you —  
some have been up steep, rocky mountains;  
some have been through long dark tunnels;  
some have been through wet, boggy marshes;  
some have been through barren wastelands.  
All have been memorable!*

*Thank you with love. ■*

## Licensing, YES — Mandated Physician Referral, NO

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For 25 years, clinical social workers have been able legally to be reimbursed by insurers for mental health services without physician referral, supervision or consultation. With the passage of the 'P' Insurance law (1977), and later, in 1985, the 'R' Insurance statute, we have enjoyed the privilege of practice autonomy, along with its incumbent responsibilities. There is no demonstrated need for clinical social work to have a physician referral requirement at this juncture. Why then did NASW include the paragraph below in their draft of licensing legislation? The State Society is unconditionally opposed to this language. It is clearly a step backward for the highest clinically trained social workers in the state and highly problematic as mental health care policy.

### Amendments to Bill No. A.5779/S. 4987

#### Section 7708. *Boundaries of Professional Practice.*

1. It shall be deemed practicing outside the boundaries of the professional practice of licensed master social work and licensed clinical social work for a person licensed pursuant to this article, in the case of treatment of any serious mental illness, to provide any mental health service for such illness on a continuous and sustained basis without a medical evaluation of the illness by, and consultation with, a physician regarding such illness. Such medical evaluation and consultation shall be to determine and advise whether any further medical care is indicated for such illness. For purposes of this section, "serious mental illness" means schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, bipolar disorder, major depressive disorder, panic disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder and autism."

There are several problems with the concepts underlying this suggested language. First, the legal concept of the professional standard of care already requires clinical social workers, as well as other non-medical practitioners, to refer to or consult with psychiatrists for those seriously mentally ill patients who require it. To make it a legal requirement to refer patients to physicians, who may or may not have appropriate psychiatric training, opens up the possibility of increase liability for social workers.

Further complications may arise. What if the patient refuses to see a physician? There is no right of patient refusal in this amendment. Where is the right of client self-determination? The Federal Medicare statute gives the patient the right to refuse physician involvement, as do many of the managed behavioral health care organizations. And what if the patient refuses to see a physician, who is liable? The social worker?

Consider who benefits economically from this language. Who pays for the mandated physician visit? Typically, the seriously mentally ill have few financial resources. Will mental health treatment in the state become hostage to the search to find a physician who will see a patient for an affordable fee? How many of the seriously mentally ill will evade needed mental health treatment to avoid seeing a physician?

With regard to physician involvement with the mentally ill, David Mechanic, a noted researcher, made the following comments in his discussion of emerging trends in mental health policy and practice:

Despite the arguments for improved integration (of general medical services and specialty health care) there remains much skepticism that busy general physicians will have the time, interest or skills to provide sensitive and meaningful care to persons with more than minor psychiatric problems. Despite efforts over the past forty years to upgrade skills of primary care doctors to appropriately detect and treat depression and other psychiatric problems, research studies show continuing poor care. Mental health specialty professionals do much better.

*Health Affairs (1998), Vol. 17, No.6, p. 89.*

Mechanic concludes that mental health professionals are more likely to diagnose and treat psychiatric disorders appropriately and to have empathy for a patient population that is commonly time-consuming and difficult. His position lends support to the State Society's objection to mandated physician referral for the seriously mentally ill.

The State Society drafted and introduced the first licensing bill in January 1993 as part of the most recent effort to regulate psychotherapy in New York. We have been consistent in our support of autonomous practice for clinical social workers, as established in 1977 with the passage of the "P" Insurance statute. We have advocated for high standards for consumer protection from unqualified or unscrupulous social work practitioners. To establish minimum competence for the delivery of mental health services, we recommend core clinical course work as well as three years of supervised experience treating patients.

We will continue to monitor the licensing effort to ensure meaningful consumer protection and substantial standards for clinical social work without decreasing the level of professional autonomy we fought so hard to obtain. We will not support crafting a bill for the sake of passing legislation. ■



# State Society Board

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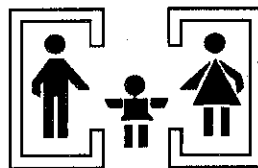
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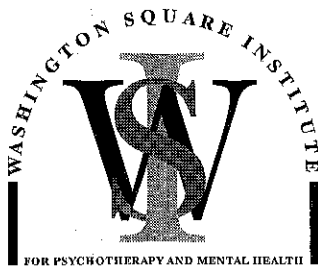
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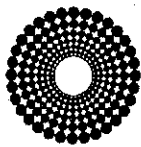
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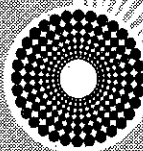
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