Integrative Health Care

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The cover of this Winter 2006 issue of Biofeedback magazine conveys the theme of this special issue: “The Integration of Biofeedback and Behavioral Health Services into Primary Care.” Angele McGrady served as guest editor for this special issue. We are grateful to her and to the contributing authors for this overview of current advances in integrative health care.

Over the past decade, the Biofeedback magazine has dedicated several special issues to promoting the integration of biofeedback, psychophysiological therapies, and related behavioral therapies into health care. Medical settings offer one of the richest opportunities for biofeedback and other mind-body therapies. Patients suffer disorders whose causes transcend simple biomedical models, and psychosocial stress plays a clear role in the origins and exacerbation of many medical complaints. The number of medical disorders for which biofeedback is effective grows with each year, yet in too many cases, biofeedback and other behavioral interventions are neglected until the patient's disorder becomes both severe and chronic.

In the Spring of 1996, under the influence of then AAFB President Angele McGrady, a special issue of Biofeedback appeared on “Applied Psychophysiology and Family Medicine.” Terence Davies, MD, Chief of Family Medicine at Eastern Virginia Medical School, and Ian Wickramasekera, PhD, visiting professor at Stanford Medical School, introduced a series of articles describing pioneering efforts to introduce biofeedback into medical settings, and to provide behavioral health training models for physicians.

In the Spring of 1999, a special issue appeared on “The Marriage of Clinical Psychophysiology and Primary Care.” Dr. Davies again served as a guest editor, and the issue included a wide range of articles, including case studies showing positive outcomes for medical patients treated through the integrative care model.

In Spring of 2003, a special issue appeared on “Pediatric Integrative Medicine.” Editorial guidance came from Timothy Culbert, MD, Rebecca Kajander, BSN, CNP, and Judson Reaney, MD, all associated with integrative pediatric medical programs at the University of Minnesota. The special issue highlighted the use of complementary and alternative therapies for children's medical problems, within a paradigm integrating high quality medical and behavioral care.

Professional Issues

Sebastian Striefel opens this issue with an article on ethical dimensions in the integrative health care setting, where each professional works as an integral part of a primary care team. In integrative care, there are no “lone rangers,” and high quality decision-making must involve dialogue across disciplines.

Next, Fred Shaffer continues his series on the University Initiative undertaken by the Biofeedback Certification Institute of America, which recognizes and promotes university-level biofeedback and neurofeedback education. Each article in this series highlights university programs in biofeedback and neurofeedback.

Special Issue

The authors in the present special issue highlight a number of evidence-based programs integrating biofeedback, behavioral therapies, and communications skills into medical care. Research continues to emerge supporting the clinical effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of integrating the behavioral interventions into the mainstream of primary health care, so that patients gain access to the behavioral health consultant as soon as relevant symptoms are reported. The introductory article in the present special issue, by Angele McGrady, will overview the special issue articles.

Feature Article

Erik Pepper and Stephen Francis examine the problems of falling and hip fractures in older adults from an evolutionary perspective. They identify several lifestyle factors contributing to the high incidence of falls, and apply Edward Taub's concept of learned dis-use to understanding the problem. Pepper and Francis propose experiential exercises to improve the older person's balance and recovery capabilities.
From the Editor

Proposals and Abstracts

Proposals and Abstracts are now invited for future special issues of Biofeedback: "Advances in Neuromuscular Education" for spring 2007 and "Advances in Neuromuscular Education" for summer 2007. The editor also welcomes proposals for future special issues of Biofeedback.