The Biofeedback Certification International Alliance (BCIA) certifies individuals who meet education and training standards in biofeedback and progressively recertifies those who advance their knowledge through continuing education. Increased national and international interest in our field has been accompanied by closer scrutiny of clinical efficacy and professional conduct. BCIA has expanded its international outreach in order to raise the standards of biofeedback and neurofeedback education and practice throughout the world. This article answers frequent questions about the growth of international certification, continuing education, ethics, and marketing your practice.

We are glad to hear from you about the many changes the Biofeedback Certification International Alliance (BCIA) has implemented to strengthen the value of our credential. In this article, we will discuss questions that we've received about topics that may be important to you. We have changed our name and developed international partnerships to better serve the global biofeedback and neurofeedback community. An exponential increase in the number of our international certificants has increased the need for high-quality, low-barrier continuing education (CE) courses to help our colleagues maintain and enhance their skills. In Summer 2011, we launched a continuing education initiative to collaborate with the Association for Applied Psychophysiology and Biofeedback (AAPB), the Biofeedback Foundation of Europe (BFE), and the International Society for Neurofeedback and Research (ISNR) to make affordable CE more readily available. At this time, we see increased interest in biofeedback and neurofeedback by consumers, state licensing boards and healthcare agencies, the military, and the Veterans Administration. Greater recognition has been accompanied by heightened scrutiny of practice standards and treatment efficacy. In this challenging environment, it is more important than ever that we all work to promote the highest professional standards and ethical behavior.

Why does BCIA feel it is important to promote certification standards outside of North America?

There is a growing international interest in biofeedback and neurofeedback. Groundbreaking research is coming from outside our borders. BCIA certification is one way to standardize training and proficiency in the use of biofeedback and neurofeedback. Adoption of standards as rigorous as ours will help international professionals gain respect from their entire healthcare community.

How has international certification progressed?

In 2011, 61% of our new neurofeedback certificants came from outside of the United States. We have seen an explosive growth in the number of certificants from the Netherlands due to their excellent training programs and increased demand for neurofeedback services. International certification, especially in Europe, is poised for unprecedented expansion. We expect that progress will be uneven across countries and regions due to language barriers, acceptance of biofeedback and neurofeedback, and the availability of training programs.

How are BCIA didactic exams performing among applicants whose first language is not English?

BCIA is delighted to report a high level of success by international applicants on our exams. In fact, they often
meet or exceed the North American pass rate. Our international partners have well-developed education and training programs that promote hard work and mastery of the scientific foundations of biofeedback and neurofeedback.

**How will our international certificants satisfy BCIA’s continuing education requirements?**

Many international groups have invited world-class biofeedback and neurofeedback professionals to their countries to teach courses and share their latest research. The annual international Applied Neuroscience Society of Australasia (ANSA), BFE, and the Society of Applied Neuroscience (SAN), and North American AAPB and ISNR meetings provide a wealth of programs that offer CE hours. BCIA’s new CE initiative will increase the availability of affordable teleseminars, recorded presentations, and published articles.

**Which new online CE options are available?**

BCIA recently launched low-cost online Clinical Update seminars. Your clinic staff can participate from the comfort of your office, view presentations in real time, ask questions, and complete a short exam to earn 1.5 hours of accredited CE—all at an affordable price. The first attendee pays $40 and may invite colleagues at that site to listen for free. They can earn CE credit by only paying $15 each to take the exam.

While attendance for each live seminar will be limited, the presentation and CE exam will be available on our website for later purchase. We plan to offer an extensive selection of courses designed for all levels of experience. Please tell us which topics and presenters interest you.

**Biofeedback** and the journal **Journal of Neurotherapy** publish high-quality print and online articles. BCIA has selected topics that are relevant to clinical practice and has created short quizzes over their content. If you subscribe to these journals, you can access an article for free and pay $15 for the short quiz to earn 1 hour of accredited CE. There are more than 40 articles available on our Web site, each categorized by topic. Check out the thought-provoking articles on ethics. You can satisfy our 3-hour ethics CE requirement by reading three of these articles. Please visit www.bcia.org and look under the Certificants tab. We plan to expand the selection of journals covered by our online CE program.

We continue to support the high-quality online seminars offered by our partner organizations like AAPB. We also invite university faculty and our dedicated vendors to develop new online programs to help us increase our certificants’ CE options. To better support accredited providers of didactic and CE educational programs, we invite them to expand their listing on our website to include more detailed information about their courses and faculty. These enhanced listings will help them market their programs more effectively.

**Why has BCIA recently taken a stronger interest in ethics education?**

As our field gains greater attention, it also faces closer scrutiny. The unethical actions of a minority of practitioners can jeopardize the credibility of our entire field. Our emphasis on ethics education is an integral part of our mission to promote the highest standards of practice. Both nationally and internationally, external audiences like licensing boards judge our certificants by our **Professional Standards and Ethical Principles**. Our rigorous ethical standards promote the reputation of our certificants and our field, and are an important reason that international professionals seek our certification.

**Which ethical issue is the “thousand-pound elephant in the room”?**

The issue that keeps us awake at night is the practice of medicine and psychology without a license. While the legal code varies across jurisdictions, unlicensed practitioners may violate practice statutes when they diagnose a disorder and develop a treatment plan. The foundation of our **Professional Standards and Ethical Principles** is our requirement that certificants must work within their legal scope of practice. When treating medical or psychological diagnoses, you must carry a government-issued healthcare license in a BCIA-approved healthcare field, or if unlicensed, you must work under appropriate supervision.

Recently a state investigator contacted BCIA about unlicensed practitioners who were suspected of practicing medicine without a license. These individuals diagnosed and treated medical complaints using biofeedback and neurofeedback. In his state, diagnosing and treating medical disorders without a license is a felony! The investigator was very impressed with our **Professional Standards and Ethical Principles** and confirmed the importance of limiting your practice to the scope of your license or your supervisor’s license.

**I am already required to complete ethics hours to maintain my professional license. May I use those hours to complete the 3-hour CE requirement?**

Definitely. You may also read three ethics articles that are listed on our Web site and then complete online quizzes to...
satisfy our ethics CE requirement for a nominal fee. Go to the Certificants menu, select Recertification, and then choose Take on Online Continuing Education Exam.

**How can I use BCIA’s Find a Practitioner directory to market my practice?**

Think of your BCIA directory listing as a free Yellow Pages business card ad for your practice, compared to a single-line business listing. We encourage all BCIA-certified professionals to update their profiles to provide more detailed information. While a business card ad costs a high monthly fee, your expanded listing is free when you certify or recertify. Go to the Certificants menu, select Market Your Practice, and then choose Update Your Professional Listing.

**How should I advertise my BCIA board certification?**

Consider the best way to educate people who will see your credentials. If you have room for it, please add text that includes the Biofeedback Certification International Alliance (BCIA). We urge you to search in all the places where your name is listed and to update your credential to include BCB, BCN, or BCB-PMD. This includes, but is not limited to, business cards, phone book and Web site listings, conference name badges and program listings, presentations, memberships, and publications.

**May I still use my Fellow designation?**

Yes. We encourage you to list your name followed by BCB, BCN, or BCB-PMD Fellow. You may need to explain the term, how hard you worked to gain this advanced designation, and why this designation is important to your clients and other professionals.

**When should I teach my clients about my BCIA credential?**

We encourage you to discuss your certification during the initial intake interview. Where appropriate, you could say that “I am the only BCIA-certified professional in our area.” This is also an excellent opportunity to explain any of your other professional designations. Don’t assume that clients know what all of those letters mean!

**May I use the BCIA logo on my website or my business card?**

Definitely. BCIA encourages you to use our logo on all professional correspondence as is appropriate with the Logo Usage Guidelines posted at www.bcia.org. Additionally, we encourage you to link to our website and publish your website in your profile under Find a Practitioner. If you have not yet done so, please update this profile so that clients will know more about you.

**Conclusion**

BCIA has anticipated and proactively responded to the challenges of national and international growth. Since our field’s increased popularity has been accompanied by increased scrutiny, we have adopted a rigorous ethical code, our Professional Standards and Ethical Principles, and have strengthened our ethics education requirement. To increase our certificants’ access to affordable CE, we have launched an initiative to create new online and recorded CE seminars and to help our partners to better market their own excellent programs. In addition, we will continue to expand the selection of articles our certificants can read for CE credit. Finally, we have helped our certificants more effectively market their practices using our new logo, designations, and expanded practitioner listings. These proactive steps support our mission to ensure that our certificants are “More than qualified, BCIA Board certified!”

Correspondence: Fred Shaffer, PhD, BCB, McClain 229, Truman State University, 100 E Normal, Kirksville, MO 63501-1820, email: fshaffer@truman.edu.