A Tribute to Eugenia Bodenhamer-Davis

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Eugenia Bodenhamer-Davis has trained generations of professionals in neurofeedback and provided visionary leadership to the board of the Biofeedback Certification International Alliance (BCIA). This article pays tribute to Genie’s signature achievements as an educator and chair of the task force that revised BCIA’s neurofeedback certification program.

A Legendary Educational Career

Eugenia Bodenhamer-Davis has trained students in neurofeedback since 1994. She taught in the University of North Texas (UNT), Department of Rehabilitation, Social Work, and Addictions. She was trained in peripheral biofeedback in the 1980s, but did not seriously study neurofeedback until the early 1990s when she heard about Eugene Peniston’s work with EEG biofeedback and substance abuse at the Fort Lyon, Colorado, Veterans Administration Hospital. She was invited by Bob Dickson, who was interested in Peniston’s work and then the Director of the Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse (TCADA), to apply for a grant to evaluate the Peniston Protocol and, if she found it to be effective, to begin training addiction counselors in Texas to use neurofeedback. With a TCADA start-up grant, she founded the UNT Neurotherapy Lab in 1991.

At that time, the only clinic in the country that provided training in EEG biofeedback and the alpha-theta protocol developed by Peniston was the Menninger Foundation Medical Center in Topeka, Kansas. Genie received her initial training in EEG biofeedback at Menninger with Peniston and Dale Walters. Shortly after that, Peniston was transferred to the Bonham, Texas, Veterans Administration Hospital, just 50 miles from UNT. Peniston continued to mentor Genie and her early students during the 2 years of their TCADA-funded project, in which they primarily treated adult probationers who had been arrested for alcohol- or drug-related offenses. Another early mentor and supporter of the UNT Neurotherapy Lab was Jonathon Walker of Dallas, who donated the lab’s first QEEG equipment. Dr. Walker helped them learn to use QEEG to guide neurofeedback as they expanded the number of students they trained and the types of clients and disorders they treated.

Genie’s specialization is in neurofeedback and she has developed expertise in treating children, adolescents, and adults with a variety of disorders, from attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder and autism to depression and substance abuse. Since 1994, she has trained over 200 professionals in annual neurofeedback workshops and 80 additional doctoral and master’s students in her Introduction to Neurofeedback course and Neurofeedback Practicum provided each semester in the Neurotherapy Lab.

Exemplary Board Service

After many years at the University of North Texas, Genie began to plan for life after retirement. The leadership at the Biofeedback Certification International Alliance (BCIA) had watched her career and knew that as soon as her schedule cleared, there would be a special place for her on their board. The timing was excellent because BCIA was about to revise its neurofeedback certification program and needed an experienced educator to guide this process.

The revision of a certification program starts with the blueprint, which must represent concepts, history, professional standards, anatomy and physiology, technology, peer-reviewed scientific findings, and validated procedures. As soon as Genie joined the BCIA board, she jumped into the process by building a task force, designing the work
flow, and overseeing each step of the revision of the blueprint. After the revised blueprint was adopted, the next step was to update the other parts of the certification including the core reading list and the exam. Next, she turned BCIA’s attention to how to best teach the application of clinical skills and persuaded the task force to adopt a revised Neurofeedback Essential Skills List. Mentors use this resource as a checklist to ensure that each student can demonstrate mastery of those fundamental competencies.

Each BCIA accredited training program had to submit its reaccreditation application and document how its curriculum incorporates BCIA’s new learning objectives. Genie assembled review teams and trained them to ensure that each team member used the same evaluation criteria. To date, didactic educators and their students have praised the new neurofeedback blueprint and reading list, and the certification exam has performed very well.

Genie is confident that the future of neurofeedback is bright because of growing public interest in drug-free treatments and increasing enrollment in neurofeedback training programs. BCIA will continue Genie’s mission by monitoring professional training program quality, promoting exacting professional standards and ethical practice among its certificants, and encouraging newly-trained practitioners to acquire the BCIA credential.

**BCIA Recognition of Genie’s Service to the Field**

Genie has been an indispensable member of the BCIA board. Her service has combined grace, professionalism, wisdom, and dedication to the field. In 2011, BCIA built a scholarship program to honor her many contributions. BCIA awards the Genie Bodenhamer-Davis Scholarship to students seeking an advanced degree in a BCIA-certified health care field from a regionally accredited university that teaches the neurofeedback blueprint as part of their degree program. Professors nominate deserving students based on their belief that neurofeedback will be an important part of their professional career. This scholarship pays all customary certification fees. To date, BCIA has presented this award to 10 students who it believes will be part of the future—the next generation of neurofeedback professionals.

**Conclusion**

Thank you Dr. Bodenhamer-Davis for all of the lives you’ve touched and the students you have taught. You have promoted excellence in neurofeedback education and practice to ensure that our professionals are “More than qualified, BCIA Board Certified!” Your BCIA family is anxious to see what you will do in this next phase of your storied career.

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