OBJECTIVES

- Articulate five key ethical principles relative to decision-making;
- Articulate key issues relative to doing internet searches on clients or potential clients;
- Discuss issues involved in “friending” both current and former clients;
Standards for Conduct

- Organizational rules & policies
- Ethics codes (e.g. APA, NASW)
- Codes of conduct (licensure related)
- Laws & rules
- Standard of care: what a reasonable & prudent practitioner would do in the same or similar circumstances (failure to meet standard of care is malpractice)

Some Practical Challenges

- Our central duty to engage – to establish a trusting relationship vs. obtaining “informed consent”
- Building dependency with the goal of building better independence
- Cultural differences & issues
- Economic realities impacting access to devices/technology

Ethical Framework I Use

- **Beneficence** – doing good; helping
- **Non-maleficence** – avoiding harm
- **Autonomy** – client’s input and role
- **Fidelity** – consistent with what was promised
- **Justice** -- welfare of client vs. others; fair use of resources – having a basis to proportion them
Web Research -- Googling

- Now that without expense and requiring little time we can research clients…..but should we?
- New NASW Code of Ethics (8/17): obtain consent before conducting an online search for information about clients (unless emergency sit.)
- Reasons for searches?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for searches</th>
<th>Positives</th>
<th>Negatives</th>
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Decision table or chart

do web research (google) a client

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Ethical Decision-Making

- It is not what is ethical vs. unethical, but the comparative ethicality of the options
- This involves weighing which principles are best dealt with through one option or another
- What are the likely positive vs. negative outcomes of choosing a given course of action?
The Electronic Age

• 96.4% MN Metro homes with kids have internet access; 81.6% without kids in metro have access
• 90% of US adults have a cell phone
• 99% in households with $75,000+ income own cell phones
• 97% of those aged 18 – 29 have them
• [www.pewresearch.org](http://www.pewresearch.org)

Challenges Related to Information

• Confidentiality
• Does info from posts on internet bring about duties?
  o Welfare of young people
  o Apparent harassment
  o Apparent threats
  o Apparent recklessness
• What about info you stumble onto?

Internet Posts & Violence

• We do not have empirical evidence on predictions based on posts
• Preliminary data suggests that posts do not in general predict
• In general this provides a basis for discussion and inquiry in a session, not a report
• Susan Klebold A Mother's Reckoning
### Traditional Boundaries with Information Access

- **Client** has access to info. about the professional based on published biography or revelations
- **Professional** only has access to info. about client from disclosures or access granted through releases
- Newspaper or TV coverage of events could provide some info

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### Dual or Multiple Relationships

Professionals should not engage in dual or multiple relationships with current or former clients in which there is a risk of exploitation or harm to the client. Where dual or multiple relationships are unavoidable, professionals are responsible for setting clear, appropriate, & culturally sensitive boundaries.

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### Internet Boundaries Challenges

- Contact w/current or former clients
- Contact with relatives of colleagues
- Social support blog encounters
- Interaction on a Caring Bridge site
- Interaction on site or blog related to hobby or area of interest
- Interaction on political action site
Self-disclosure by Professional

- Risk management vs. helping client – corrections is different
- There are not clear rules on this, and there is great variability in the field
- On professional website:
  - What is helpful/expected?
  - What is risky/ill-advised?
- What about self-disclosure elsewhere on the internet?

Communication & Boundary Challenges

- Generational differences in expectations
- Ability to be in contact at all hours, even when professional is away from office
- For the high risk or dependent client, easier to slip into high level contact
- Emails & text messages create record & can lead to sense of obligation

Text Messaging

- A growing number of people do texting instead of phone call or email;
- This is an abbreviated type of message with less information
- This the only way to quickly reach people who don’t answer phones but text
- How do you use texting, or how have you considered using it?
- Positives vs. negatives?
Texting for Service Delivery

- **Veterans Crisis Line** (800) 273-8255 or text 838255
- **Crisis Connection** program with texting in 7 counties in NE Minn.
- May be a way of initiating care – “patient engagement”
- Growing number use for follow-up or crisis contacts

Current & Future Service Options

- What about Skype – it is free & easy but not HIPAA compliant
- The telephone, without encryption, is not HIPAA compliant
- Systems which are compliant
- What are pluses and minuses of providing service this way?
- Uber & Lyft & client transportation

Cell Phones: A Potential Treasure Trove of Tools

- A practitioner can record & share clip
- A practitioner can make an instructional clip – a client can even film a demonstration done in office
- What are boundary issues in creating this sort of App or tool?
- What risks to client confidentiality?
Smart Phones, Tablets & Apps

- Apps which come in all shapes & sizes can be used on smart phones, tablets
- **Cognitive bias modification (CBM)** using an app for social anxiety which directs attention away from hostile faces
- **Nader Amir** at San Diego State – 30$/week for anxiety disorder
- **Daniel Pine** at NIMH – 40 children with chronic anxiety

More Examples of Apps

- **Mood 24/7** [https://www.mood247.com](https://www.mood247.com) get to know yourself
- PTSD Coach Mobile App downloaded 45,000 times in 58 countries [www.americantelemed.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3969](http://www.americantelemed.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3969)
- Defense Dept: T-2 Mood Tracker identify & track stress; Breathe2Relax release stress; Tactical Breather manage stress

Apps Continued

- Healthline rates best Apps for various things
- iMedicalApps -- examines new apps
- Can be a source of reference information or assist the practitioner
- Can enable a client to log in personal data and keep focused on goals
- Some use sensors & can monitor blood pressure, blood sugar, etc.
- App that can detect mood changes via voice – early warning for bipolar?
**Apps**

- Best Anxiety iPhone & Android Apps – *Self-Help for Anxiety Management, Sleep Time - Alarm Clock, Stop Panic & Anxiety Help; Anti-Anxiety APP*
- Best Depression iPhone & Android Apps
  - *Sleep Cycle; Health Through Breath; Depression CBT Self-Help Guide; Positive Activity Jackpot; Operation Reach Out*
- Some Apps connect to a service provider

**Many New Tools & Also Challenges**

- A practitioner can record & share a video clip
- A therapist can make instructional clip – a client can even film a demonstration done in office
- This rapid expansion in options and tools is overwhelming, even for the computer-savvy person

**Social Networking Sites (April 2017)**

- Facebook – 1.5 billion/mo.
- Youtube – 1.499 billion/mo.
- Twitter – 400 million/mo.
- Instagram – 275 million/mo.
- Linkedin – 250 million/mo.
- Reddit – 125 million/mo.
- VK -- 120 million/mo.
Friending on Facebook

- Program site vs. personal site
- Current clients
- Former clients
- Does your center have a standard or rule?
- Examples of rules

Networking for Support

- Pro-Ana blogs: social support, ways to cope, self-expression – risk of exposure & question about whether it encourages (look up pro-ana on Wikipedia)
- Pro-Mia blogs: bulimia - related
- Victims of abuse: rape and sexual assault victim bulletin boards
- Do an internet search about any condition or problem to see what is there
- Support vs. Trigger – endless challenge

Other Networking Issues

- Caring Bridge – posting about illness
  - Having your bridge open to clients
  - Posting on client’s bridge
- Blogs -- posting responses;
- Sites focused on special interests:  
  - Client alerts you to site
  - You encounter client on a site
  - Former client alerts you to site
Search Engines (May 2018)

- **Google** – 1.8 billion unique monthly
- Bing – 500 million unique monthly
- **Yahoo Search** – 490 million monthly
- Baidu – 480 million monthly
- Ask – 300 million monthly
- **Aol Search** – 200 million monthly
- **DuckDuckGo** – 150 million monthly

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Google & Net Research

- Should you “Google” a client?
  - Emergency Room – identity issue
  - Client denies suicide history but has prior attempts
  - Reality check on claims by client
  - Checking criminal justice history
  - Screening for sex offenders
  - Custody studies; adoption

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Google & Net Research (cont.)

- What if the client or student googles you?
  - Intern entering therapy googles her therapist and then wonders if she’s “blown it” by doing this.
  - What if they tell you? What if you suspect?
  - Sites that evaluate professionals – YELP has >25 million hits a month
Google & Net Research (cont.)
- Hiring or credentialing process – do you google candidates?
- What about field placement students or candidates for supervision?
- Do you disclose this practice?
- If you stumble on information?
- Expectations may be changing as regards having things on net be discovered

Google & Net Research (cont.)
- There do not appear to be court cases yet
- Experts warn that there are liabilities
- Most applicants are not told the truth about data found – anything can be false
- Would be best to forewarn of your practices
- Don’t use false identities to search
- Applicants may be able to learn of search

Self Protection
- Be aware of your web-presence
  - “Google” yourself
  - If there is false information, contact site administrator to get things changed
- Could control on-line presence by posting your own www.google/com/profile?
- Collegial discussion – develop standards
- Firms that offer protection are growing but unclear how valuable they are
Communications & Social Media Policies

- Do you have any, and if so, how are they communicated?
  - Email
  - Texting
  - Web research/googling
  - Interaction on the internet
  - Friending on Facebook
- Do you have any office rules about recording devices (e.g. cell phones)?

Some real world examples from Survivors of Torture treatment programs

Thank you for attending this webinar by
Gary R. Schoener, MEq, LP
on
January 23, 2019

The National Capacity Building Project is a project of the Center for Victims of Torture:
www.cvt.org

More resources are available at: www.HealTorture.org