

# The Value of Training and Education in Clinical Psychopharmacology for Mental Health Professionals

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# Certificate of Attendance vs. CE info

- All attendees will receive a cert. of attendance
- Attendees that can benefit from APA sponsored CE **MUST** complete the training evaluation
  - Link will be in the chat at the end of the presentation
  - 1.5 CE, certs. to emailed by next week (or sooner)
  - *NMSU is approved by the American Psychological Association to sponsor continuing education for psychologists. NMSU maintains responsibility for the program and its content.*
- Any and all feedback welcomed

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# Introduction

- My Background (MN roots → UND → UNM → Pueblo of Acoma → Indian Health Service → NMSU, etc).
- How I was encouraged to pursue an advanced degree at the 2012 APA Convention, event for Early Career Psychologists
- Example of value: 25yo NA female taking a contraceptive and (later) St. John's Wort; hx of depression, marital distress, and risk for SUDs.

# Learning Objectives

- List at least 3 Master of Science in Clinical Psychopharmacology (MSCP) degree requirements
- Name 7 postdoctoral MSCP degree programs (for psychologists)
- Understand the intersectionality between American Psychological Association (APA) Designation criteria, Academic degree requirements, and State laws with prescriptive authority
- Regarding the field of addictions, conclude with at least 3 benefits of the training and education in Clinical Psychopharmacology for Mental Health Professionals
- Understand how the power to prescribe includes also the power to “unprescribe.” (aka titration/discontinuation)

# What's the value of advanced training in Clinical Psychopharmacology?

- Better patient care, multidimensional conceptualization
- Improved/accurate diagnostics and treatment
- Medication knowledge and interpretation of medical reports
- Improved consultation with allied health professionals
- Improved access to and continuity of care
- All applicable to the field of Addictions and Dual Dx!

# Common MSCP degree Requirements

- Didactic Coursework (may include hands-on clinical skill training; e.g. neuroanatomy, physical assessment/vitals, national exam prep)
- Supervised Clinical Fieldwork (aka Practica, Internship, Fellowship)
  - Physical Assessment
  - Combined Medicine (Psychological Intervention & Supervised Pharmacotherapy)
- Final Capstone Examination

# Postdoctoral MSCP advanced degree Programs

- Current [APA Designated Programs](#):
- New Mexico State University (first state to pass prescriptive authority laws)
- California School of Professional Psychology (AIU; first Program to offer a MSCP degree)
- The Chicago School of Professional Psychology
- Drake University (Iowa)
- Fairleigh Dickinson University (NJ)
- Idaho State University
  
- \*University of Colorado-Denver (Designation status pending)
  
- \*\*Non-psychologist Psychopharmacology Certificate Programs: [Example](#)



# Current States with RxP Legislation

- NM (first to pass laws; Hawaii and Oregon tried first)
- LA
- IL
- ID
- IA
- CO
- UT (no MSCP degree Program in this state yet)
  
- \*States proposing or prepping bill (next few slides over)
- ARNPs couldn't even prescribe until 1983

# Alliant International University

- **George M. Kapalka, PhD, MS, ABPP**  
**Distinguished Professor, Program Director**
- **First MSCP in the US, established 1998, APA designated**
- **About 700 graduates**
- **Students may meet RxP licensure in all RxP states**
  - **Only 80 hr physical assessment practicum required for graduation**
  - **Other practica may be arranged post-degree to meet RxP requirements**
- **2 years, 5 courses per year, 1 class at a time in 8 week terms**
- **Live classes via Zoom once per week on weekends**
- **Faculty includes prescribing psychologists, psychologists, psychiatrist, nurse practitioner, prescribing pharmacists**

# University of Colorado Denver

Director: Amy Wachholtz, PhD, MDiv, MSCP  
Amy.Wachholtz@UCDenver.Edu

- MSCP-only (non-lisc track; 2 year)
- MSCP+ Prescribing Fellowship Certificate (lisc track; 3 years)
- Meets CO HB23-1701 + APA Program standards
- Coursework
  - 8 week blocks taught sequentially in a semester (2 per semester)
  - 1 night/week online live class
  - Exception: Physical Assessment Course in person- 1 week intensive course
  - Fellowship: 750 hours (150 unique patients)



<https://clas.ucdenver.edu/psychology/graduate-program-clinical-psychopharmacology>

# States working on RxP bills

- New York
- Pennsylvania
- Texas
- Vermont
- Washington
- Hawai'i
- California
- Florida
- Arizona

# States with active RxP groups or have expressed an interest in pursuing RxP in the next legislative session:

- Wyoming
- Montana
- Nebraska
- Tennessee
- Virginia
- Maryland
- New Jersey

# Why all the hype and promotion?

- Word of Mouth!!
- Testimonials
- Lifelong learning
- Improved patient/client care

# Professional Testimonials

“Completing my master's degree in clinical psychopharmacology and obtaining my credential as a prescribing psychologist has allowed me to work with underserved populations for the past 20 years. My initial work as a prescribing psychologist was with the Indian Health Service in Montana and New Mexico. As a prescribing psychologist, I was able to offer medication treatments for children and adults suffering from serious mental illness. In the vast majority of cases, I was the only psychiatric prescriber within a hundred miles. Following my work with Indian Health Service, I worked as a prescribing psychologist for the U. S. military. Because of my training, and through the use of telehealth services, I was able to provide much needed services to active-duty military men and women in remote locations where psychopharmacological services were not available. **In addition to providing care for conditions such as depression, bipolar disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder, and schizophrenia, in both settings, I was able to provide much needed care for individuals battling alcohol and opioid addiction.** I credit my education and training in clinical psychopharmacology with the ability to help thousands of highly vulnerable individuals who would have likely gone without much needed evidence-based psychiatric services.”

Bret A. Moore, Psy.D., ABPP

Clinical & Prescribing Psychologist

Author, Editor, & Consultant

# Testimonials Cont.

"As a practicing prescribing psychologist for the past 15 years I have increasingly appreciated how well my postdoctoral training in psychopharmacology prepared me to do this job safely and effectively. **I admit that I was originally surprised by the number of patients I encountered who struggle with addiction, but later understood the insidious pervasiveness of substance use disorders (SUD) in the general population. By no means do I consider myself an addictions expert, however, I have found that my ability to competently prescribe medications to treat SUD is a powerful tool, especially when it is part of a multidisciplinary plan that includes addictions therapists and other specialists.**"

David Shearer, PhD, MSCP

Board Certified Medical Psychologist

Past President, APA Division 55 Board of Directors

Chair, WA State Psychological Assn RxP Workgroup

Editor-in-Chief, Newsletter of Division 55



# Intersectionality/Convergence

- APA Designation Criteria in the Training and Education of Clinical Psychopharmacology ([Model Curriculum](#))
- Academic Degree Requirements ([NMSU Example](#))
- State laws of Prescriptive Authority (now 7 states)
- ASPPB - [Psychopharmacology Examination of Psychologists](#)

# Public Safety and Trust

- Laws written with the influence of the medical community
- Consultation and Medical Literacy
- State Board Prescriptive Authority license → Board of Pharmacy Controlled Substance # → DEA # → Prescription Monitoring Program (e.g. NM PMP)
- Substantial Continuing Education (most Programs have APA Sponsored CE; 60 CE for renewal, 40 must be Psychopharm in NM)
- Professional Organizations
  - State Psychological Association of NM
  - APA Div. 55: Society of Prescribing Psychologists

# Opposition and Ethics

- Prescriptive Authority for Psychologists: The Next Step (journal article)
- APA Practice Guidelines Regarding Psychologists' Involvement in Pharmacological Issues
- Influence of individual graduate training programs
  - Comp Exam example (efficacy of psychotherapy vs. psychotropics)
- The influence of the AMA, state BOMs, and NAMI.

# The Power to Unprescribe?!

- The power/ability to prescribe includes also the power/ability to “unprescribe.”
- Titration/Discontinuation
- Recognition of Side Effects presenting as psych symptoms (including intoxication and withdrawal)
  - Brief patient benzo story as an early career psychologist
- Recognition of serious Adverse Drug Reactions
- Recognition of disease pathology mimicking psych symptoms

# Resources

- Epocrates
- UpToDate
- [PsychDB](#)
- Handbook of Clinical Psychopharmacology for Psychologists
- [Handbook of Clinical Psychopharmacology for Therapists](#)
- 3D Brain app
- [SAMHSA - Medications for Substance Use Disorders](#)

# Q & A - Thank you!

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