



From the Editor

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This special edition of *Professional Development: The International Journal of Continuing Social Work Education* features successes and issues experienced by faculty and social work practitioners in the effort to appreciate the need for well-informed and trained social workers to work with people with disabilities.

Hanes, Carter, MacDonald, McMurphy and Skinner's article, *Exploring Social Work and Disability in U.S. Schools of Social Work*, reports findings from an online survey of deans and directors from accredited schools of social work within the United States, specifically exploring disability curriculum, access, accommodations and inclusion. Members of this research team who represent three Canadian schools of social work--Carleton University, University of Windsor, and Dalhousie University--began with exploring the state of disability related research, course content, accessibility and supports within Canadian schools of social work, and in this paper have broadened their exploration to include North America. A key finding was that despite the progressive evolution of disability legislation and the increased focus on accessible postsecondary education, undergraduate social work programs in the U.S. still rely heavily on a medical interpretation of disability; whereas graduate programs focus on a progressive, social justice perspective.

In the paper entitled, *Disability Disclosure among College Students with Psychiatric Disabilities in Professional Majors: Risks and Implications for Rural Communities* by Valerie Thompson-Ebanks, light is shed on the increased challenges faced by university students with psychiatric disabilities in professional programs located in rural areas. In exploring the literature, disability stigma and reluctance to disclose the disability to disability services are highlighted. This article suggests an anti-stigma initiative for social work education to counter disability stigma and increase disclosure with particular relevance to rural postsecondary institutions.

Carter, Coyle, Currie, and Cragg, a team of

faculty and community researchers from the University of Windsor and Windsor community, describe how the move towards deinstitutionalization for individuals with intellectual disabilities in the 1990s led to an increase in responsibilities and challenges for older caregivers. The paper, *Exploring Resiliency in Parents and Families of Adult Children: Living at Home with a Dual Diagnosis*, describes care givers who took on an activist role to ensure that their child received needed services, and continued to do so as their child reached adulthood. The authors capture the experiences of 15 caregivers of adult children with a dual diagnosis in the qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews that indicated that caregivers of adult children who have been diagnosed with a dual diagnosis experience many challenges, which can be alleviated or strengthened based on the assistance they receive from agencies, informal support networks, and professionals. The research focused on the coping skills of parental caregivers of adults with a dual diagnosis and the resources that parental caregivers need to continue to cope successfully with their commitment to continue caring for their adult children.

Driedger and Hansen's article *Literacy and Disability: A Study of Transformation*, reports on participatory action research conducted in collaboration with Independent Living Centers at five locations across Canada, from Halifax, Nova Scotia, to Vernon, British Columbia. The researchers recognize the low literacy rates and barriers to education for people with disabilities. Literacy was defined as meaning making in peoples' lives, providing a broad conceptualization of the term. Driedger and Hansen explore whether "disabled people improve their quality of life, as defined by themselves, through improved literacy skills." Literacy programmes were delivered based upon transformative educational methods that included individualized skills sessions. Three key findings were reported, one, an increase in participant self-esteem; two, improved literacy skills; and, three, furthering education. People with disabilities of-

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ten have oppressive school experiences. The researchers were cognizant of this and made concerted efforts to be inclusive and respectful of the participants.

Nathan Hauch's article provides a very interesting discussion of the provision of attendant care services to people with disabilities living in the province of Ontario, Canada. He writes from the standpoint of a person with a disability and a community activist who is well versed in federal and provincial disability legislation and policy in Canada. His paper is interesting in that it incorporates two conflicting disability frameworks to discuss the need for comprehensive support services for people with disabilities in Ontario. These frameworks include a medical model of disability supports and the independent living model which adheres to a rights-based philosophy especially in self-directed funding, which is much different than the medical model. Throughout his paper, Nathan describes in great detail the existing attendant care support programs. He then develops a framework and a position wherein he describes and advocates for greater involvement of people with disabilities in determining and controlling the delivery of attendant care services.

Gregor Wolbring, an associate professor with the Institute in Public Health, and Lucy Diep, a student from the University of Calgary, are very much involved in the "Ability Studies" program. Professor Wolbring is noted for his research in the area of technologies, disability, and ethics, and he is recognized for his extensive inclusion of students as co-researchers and co-authors. Although the authors are not from the field of social work and may not be well versed in the intersection between social work and technology, they are well versed in the area of disability and technology and in this article they show their expertise by carrying out a very comprehensive survey of social work materials to examine the manner in which social work students and academics employ technologies in their research, especially as it pertains to people with disabilities. Not surprisingly, Wolbring and Diep find that social work academics only minimally incorporate various technologies in their research. These authors give social work academics and especially those in-

involved in continuing social work education something to contemplate as they develop course materials relating to people with disabilities.

Alice Home, in the paper entitled, *Working with Special Needs Adoptive Parents: Insiders' Perspectives on What Professionals Need to Know*, writes about how raising children with disabilities means learning to parent differently. Home stresses how social workers can help if they are knowledgeable about disability issues and the implications of disability on the family unit. This paper presents findings from a Canadian study on challenges and supports of parents whose adopted children have disabilities, disorders, medical conditions, or pre-natal substance exposure. Interviews with 18 families, three parent associations and five social workers reveal challenges around parent preparation, understanding the child's needs, accessing resources and advocating effectively. Home makes it clear that limited post-adoption support and gaps in professional education and community awareness make a difficult situation worse. Home discusses the implications of strengthening continuing learning.

The authors featured in this special edition on disability view social work as a profession that needs to embrace a progressive, social justice perspective on disability, which broadens our understanding of the barriers faced by people with disability and of the options for moving toward a fully accessible and inclusive society. As you, the reader, consider the approaches to disability and social work education about disability, we hope it furthers your understanding of disability issues within social work education, policy and practice.

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