Introduction to Special Issue: Entering the Digital World: Cybertechnology and Clinical Social Work Practice

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The impact of cybertechnology on clinical social work practice has been a microcosm of social work as a profession: it has occurred at the macro, mezzo, and micro levels. Cyber communication has affected the way we practice clinical social work, the way we teach clinical social work, and has added another ethical dimension to traditional social work principles and values.

We as Co-Editors of this Special Edition on Cybertechnology are pleased to offer significant scholarly contributions to the field of social work and cybertechnology, reflective of issues pertaining to clinical practice, ethics and education. First there are three insightful papers on the ethical and legal implications of integrating cybertechnology in social work practice, by Frederic Reamer, Bryanne Harris and Rachel Birnbaum, and Laura Groshong and David Phillips, respectively. There are two notable articles by Karen Zilberstein, and Shelley Craig and colleagues on the cultural implications of cybertechnology. Faye Mishna and colleagues, Bethany Good and Lin Fang, and Amy Lopez have made important contributions to how

cybertechnology has been used effectively in psychotherapy, while highlighting the need to be mindful of the potential challenges, as well as the benefits, with this new partnership. There are, not surprisingly, two thought provoking articles specifically about working with adolescents by Diane Barth and Nicole Dubus, the generation that has grown up with cybertechnology and that ubiquitously uses digital tools with fluency and ease in communicating with others. Finally there are three stimulating articles about the use of cybertechnology in social work education by Megan Holmes and colleagues, Sally Jones, and Wendy Smith, outlining the benefits and challenges of the exponential growth of virtual learning environments in social work education.

As we stand on the cusp of a world transformed by cybertechnology, we hope these articles will help clinical social work keep in mind the human connection that we strive to create and preserve, while integrating the ways we can use this “brave new world” to enhance that connection.

Laura Groshong and Faye Mishna are Special Issue Co-Editors.

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