



## Introduction to the Special Issue: Invited Papers from the 2017 APAHC Conference

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### Abstract

The 8th biennial national conference of the Association of Psychologists in Academic Health Centers (APAHC) was held in Detroit, MI, March 9–11, 2017. All speakers were invited to contribute manuscripts based on their conference presentations to this special issue of the *Journal of Clinical Psychology in Medical Settings*, and five presenters did so. All manuscripts were peer reviewed by experts in the field. The Conference Co-Chairs, Drs. Amy M. Williams and John A. Yozwiak, serve as Guest Editors for the special issue with Associate Editorial support from Dr. Elizabeth D. Cash. This article provides a brief overview of the rationale for the choice of the conference theme and the speakers, and a brief introduction to the articles in this special issue.

**Keywords** 2017 APAHC Conference · Healthcare · Roles of psychologists

The 8th biennial national conference of the Association of Psychologists in Academic Health Centers (APAHC) was held on March 9–11, 2017 in Detroit, MI. The theme of the conference was Promoting Psychology in the Evolving Healthcare Landscape: Enhancing the Well-being of Patients, Providers, and Populations. The conference theme recognizes that the healthcare landscape is changing, and there is a need to continue to define and redefine the roles of psychologists in that system, as well as the value of discovering additional roles. The conference sought to address a range of clinical, research, training, and administrative topics pertinent to psychologists working in academic health centers (AHCs). The choice of the conference theme was also informed by the importance of the Institute for Health Improvement's Triple Aim of healthcare (improved patient

experience, improved population health, and cost-effectiveness of care) (Berwick, Nolan, & Whittington, 2008), and the fourth aim that was recently added (improving the life of healthcare providers) (Bodenheimer & Sinsky, 2014).

The theme of the conference and the speakers were also chosen to reflect the mission of APAHC, which is to serve as “the voice of psychology in medical schools and other professional schools in AHCs and teaching hospitals.” APAHC is committed to meeting the needs of psychologists working as clinicians, educators, researchers, and leaders in medical teaching settings, and to promoting the interests of AHC psychologists in relevant organizations like the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) with our physician and allied health colleagues. Members of APAHC work in diverse clinical departments, are engaged in a range of clinical, research, educational, and administrative functions, and span the career spectrum, from trainees through early, mid, and late career psychologists. The programming of the conference was intended to be narrow enough to be consistent with the conference theme, but broad enough to be applicable to the full career lifespan of a psychologist working in a medical setting.

The speakers for the conference were chosen to reflect the theme of defining psychology's role in the rapidly changing healthcare landscape. Given the diversity in APAHC's membership and those psychologists working in medical settings, the choice of speakers and topics

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were broad. The theme of the conference was reflected by the topics covered by the three keynote speakers. Dr. Katherine C. Nordal, Executive Director of the American Psychological Association (APA) Practice Directorate, discussed advocacy and accessibility of psychology to the general population via healthcare systems. Dr. W. Douglas Tynan, Director of Integrated Health Care at APA and Acting Director of APA Center for Psychology and Health, addressed integrated mental and behavioral health services in primary care and other healthcare settings. Dr. Jessica Henderson Daniel, President of APA, discussed the inclusion of cultural diversity in healthcare instruction and training.

In addition to the keynote presentations, positioning psychologists to be involved in the future of healthcare was an important feature of many of the presentations throughout the conference. Integrated behavioral health training across one's career, leadership perspectives on integrating psychologists in medical departments, and interprofessional education were topics that reflected this theme. Topics that pertained to clinical issues were diverse, but also emphasized providing psychologists with the skills and competence to work in integrated care and the evolving healthcare system. These presentations included interventions for centralized pain disorders, holistic cognitive-behavioral therapy, implementing behavioral intervention technologies in AHCs, and interventions to reduce health disparities in adolescents. Additional topics that related to the administrative and educational role of psychologists in AHCs were also covered, including the role of psychologists in quality improvement in healthcare, a prematriculation program for medical students, and the importance of provider well-being. Pertinent to the work of many of the conference attendees, a presentation on ethics and confidentiality in medical settings was included.

The choice to include articles based on presentations at the APAHC Conference in the *Journal of Clinical Psychology in Medical Settings (JCPMS)* is clear, as this journal is the flagship journal of APAHC. As such, the objectives and content of this journal reflect the mission of APAHC, particularly, advancing interdisciplinary research and practice in the interface between psychology and medicine. In the service of this objective, *JCPMS* publishes original manuscripts related to the work of those psychologists practicing primarily in AHCs with the diverse medical populations that are represented at these AHCs. The topics in the journal include, but are not limited to, theoretical and practical issues related to the practice of psychology in medical settings (i.e., AHC leadership, administration, and governance; professional training; and clinical practice). With such a focus, the APAHC Conference presenters were invited to include a manuscript representing their presentation from the 2017 APAHC Conference for publication in this special issue.

For this special issue, five articles are included. Each article is based on a presentation at the conference. Drs. Ashton and Sullivan discuss ethical issues that often confront psychologists who work in AHCs. They offer suggestions for best practices when faced with these ethical dilemmas. Drs. Ward, Zagoloff, Rieck, and Robiner based their article on their panel presentation on interprofessional education. The authors describe important skills for psychologists to productively collaborate with other healthcare professionals. The importance of incorporating interprofessional education activities into the training of psychologists in light of the healthcare system moving to value-based reimbursement and collaborative practice is highlighted. The roles related to interprofessional education that psychologists can play are covered. Drs. Abouljoud, Ryan, Eshelman, Bryce, and Jesse discuss the factors that support integrating psychologists into specialty care clinics, including financial and payor frameworks, as well as the unique skills that psychologists possess. Strategies for integrating psychologists into these clinics are proposed. Dr. Bonin highlights the role of psychologists in quality improvement at academic health centers. Ways to increase professional competencies and collaborate with medical colleagues in quality improvement, as well as the important positioning of psychologists in these projects, are discussed. Drs. Penwell-Waines, Ward, Kirkpatrick, Smith, and Abouljoud review the literature on healthcare professional well-being. The authors also propose changes that must occur for the greatest impact on well-being, and highlight research opportunities to move well-being in healthcare professionals forward.

As the healthcare landscape continues to change, the roles and competencies of psychologists integrated within healthcare must also evolve. APAHC's mission allows it to grow and evolve within this system as well. The aim of the 2017 APAHC Conference was to highlight the changes in healthcare, as well as demonstrate the various roles, competencies, and contributions of psychologists in AHCs across the country. It is anticipated that future APAHC conferences will also be structured and developed based on the roles, responsibilities, and needs of psychologists in AHCs.

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### Compliance with Ethical Standards

**Conflict of interest** Dr. John A. Yozwiak, Dr. Amy M. Williams, and Dr. Elizabeth D. Cash declare that they have no conflict of interest.

**Human and Animal Rights and Informed Consent** This article does not contain any studies with human participants or animals performed by the authors.

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