

Immediate Past-President's Message

Beth N. Rom-Rymer, Ph.D.

It was less than a month ago, that I announced that our Prescriptive Authority legislation, SB 2187, had overwhelmingly passed both our State House (94-21) and our State Senate unanimously (57-0). At that time, we expected that the successful bill would arrive on the Governor's desk on July 1st and we had hoped that he would sign it by the end of August.

Startlingly, we learned, on June 24th, that the Governor had already received our bill and was planning to sign it quickly. In fact, Governor Pat Quinn signed our bill at 3:41 p.m. on Wednesday, June 25th. Our Governor, who has made a significant commitment to healthcare for the underserved and vulnerable members of our community, understands that prescribing psychologists can make a difference in increasing the numbers of high caliber healthcare professionals around our state.

Illinois has now become the third state in the country and the first northern industrial state, in which licensed clinical psychologists with advanced, specialized training, can prescribe medications for mental health disorders. Our bill had been powerfully and effectively championed by Senator Don Harmon (D), Senator Dave Syverson (R), Representative John Bradley (D), and Representative Raymond Poe (R).

"This is a landmark moment for mental health care," said Norman B. Anderson, PhD, APA's executive vice president and chief executive officer. "Allowing properly trained clinical psychologists to prescribe is a logical step in helping to improve access to quality mental health care for consumers, especially the underserved. And the collaborative approach between prescribing psychologists and physicians in Illinois should help to ensure coordinated patient care."

As many of you are well aware the rhetoric that had been used against us in the legislature had been fierce and unrelenting. Our heroic legislative sponsors brought the American Nurses' Association-Illinois Chapter and the Illinois Society for Advanced Practice Nursing to our side. What brought the state medical and psychiatric societies to the negotiating table were our psychologists' successive legislative victories in both the Senate and the House; the steady growth of psychology's support from state labor unions, the powerful Sheriffs' Association, the statewide Police Chiefs' Association, the statewide Fraternal Order of Police, Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart,

significant religious institutions, and other influential groups; and our steadfastness in staying the course. In the end, the Medical Society and the Psychiatric Society changed their positions from "opposed" to "neutral." No significant opposition remained and the votes in both the Illinois State House and State Senate, on May 29th and 30th, were overwhelmingly favorable, with the State Senate passing our bill unanimously: 57-0.



As you may remember, one of the most significant contributions that our new Illinois law will immediately make is that psychology graduate students, all over the country, will now be able to study Clinical Psychopharmacology at the graduate, predoctoral level, and know that they will have the opportunity for significant prescriptive authority in Illinois when they graduate. We have provided a clear path for graduate students in psychology to become prescribing psychologists. We are also providing a path and a vision for young students in high school and college, who are strong in the hard sciences, and have a passion for a psychological understanding of human behavior, to prescribe as psychologists.

While there are constraints in our law currently, I have no doubt that these constraints will be lifted over time. As many of you are well aware, all professionals who advocate for the expansion of their scope of practice (optometrists, advanced practice nurses, nurse anesthetists, etc.) must take "many bites of the apple" before they reach the full potential of their expanded scope. Moreover, our prescribing psychologists will demonstrate not only safe prescribing but effective prescribing. After all, prescribing psychologists have a full array of robust therapeutic (psychological as well as pharmacological) interventions that they can make.

There has been some criticism of our negotiating with our fiercest adversaries and coming to a "negotiated settlement." The beauty of our col-

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laborative work, however, is that the resistance of psychiatrists to working with prescribing psychologists in the hospitals, medical centers and training institutions throughout our state is dissipating. All of the medical health providers have officially agreed that psychologists with specialized training, can prescribe. And, in assessing the infrastructure of mental health in our state, the mental health consumer advocacy organizations, such as NAMI and Thresholds, are beginning to see us differently now. They are beginning to see us as their effective partners in addressing the critical mental health shortages in our state.

I am now in the process of creating a directory of training facilities and educational institutions that will provide training for those psychologists who would like to prescribe. To that end, I am traveling around the state to meet with Medical Center Directors, hospital CEO's, and academic training directors.

As I noted previously, I will be talking to you, individually, to discuss your specific interests in prescribing and what options this new law provides for you. I will be calling you but please feel free to call me (312-961-1735). I will also be holding in-person meetings around the state over the next several months to discuss the implications of our bill for Illinois and for you and your colleagues.

Two prescribing psychologists, who are also Illinois licensed clinical psychologists, will be appointed by the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation to sit on our Licensing Board. They will be involved, with the rest of the Licensing Board, in writing the rules and regulations of our new law. This process, which will begin shortly, should take from 12-18 months. After the Rules and Regulations have been written and have been opened for public comment, there will be a conclusion to that process, after which our law will become effective. It has taken a long time

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Legislative Update

Terrence J. Koller, Ph.D., ABPP, Legislative Liaison

What a whirlwind legislative session this was. As many of you know IPA was able to pass a prescriptive authority bill that was signed by the Governor. The bill powered through the legislative process but required negotiations to finish its passage in the House. The amended bill has some limitations but we fully expect that, like other non-physician prescribing bills, these limits will be withdrawn as experience demonstrates the safe practices of prescribing psychologists. When negotiations were at the eleventh hour, the nurses, physicians and psychiatrists were willing to give us an "agreed" bill if we accepted an amendment to our bill. Before deciding whether to accept this amendment, it was discussed with psychologists who are already prescribing in New Mexico to hear their opinions. While they realized this amendment meant that they may not be able to prescribe in Illinois, they and others on the call agreed that this was a bill for the future of psychology. There was agreement that no matter how long it took for the first person to prescribe in Illinois, this was a huge step forward for the profession and for the people we serve. With that it was decided to accept the amendment. Going forward, Dr. Beth Rom-Rymer, the gladiator behind this bill, is working with educational institutions, hospitals and students to ensure that good training is available for those wishing to pursue it.

At the Legislative Committee meeting in June, chaired by Dr. Patricia Pimental, a number of legislative agenda items for the next session were discussed. They include ensuring that psychologists are included as Medicaid providers, amending the Probate Act to eliminate the unnecessary



Drs. Koller and Rom-Rymer celebrating the passage of the IPA prescriptive authority bill with members of the IPA Council.

physician signature when individuals are being evaluated based on their mental health and neuropsychological conditions, obtaining hospital staff status for psychologists, and working in a coalition to make changes to the Firearms Reporting Act. The other issue we will be working hard is to ensure that the Rules that relate to our RxP Act are written in a way that makes obtaining the certification a reasonable endeavor. These are big but very important issues.

We of course are always open to hear about legislative items that are important to you. We have limited resources but we can work legislative issues if we have someone who is knowledgeable about the issues and is willing to be a "gladiator." ■