

## A time to look back and a time to look ahead



It is traditional to spend time each New Year thinking about the accomplishments of the past year and looking forward to new goals and challenges in the year to come. On behalf of the Board of the OPA, this NewsBrief is an update on OPA's accomplishments in 2014 and a taste of what you can expect from the OPA in 2015.

2014 has been a year of renewal and change; a rededication to ensuring the OPA is a bold, vital, and ambitious organization; a force to be reckoned with; a strong voice for those we serve, as well as for the profession.

There was much to do, and the OPA's Board, staff, and members rolled up our sleeves and charged right in. Our expectations were high, and our goals sometimes challenging, but our achievements were many. You have every right to be proud of OPA, and what we've accomplished together.

As we put 2014 behind us, we would like to give you an overview of the OPA's activities over the past year, and what you can look forward to in 2015.

### Staff Changes

In August of 2013, we were thrilled to welcome Jan as our first Chief Executive Officer (CEO). While the role was initially part-time, it soon became clear that Jan was working full-time hours (and then some). Thankfully, we were able to make the CEO position full-time. With all of our plans, it was important that Jan be supported by a dedicated, experienced, and professional staffing complement. This was accomplished by hiring Ryan Morley as our first Chief Operating Officer (COO) and Natasha Teoli as our first Director of Planning and External Affairs. We were also pleased to welcome back Anna DiDonato, as Membership Services Coordinator. This team has been of tremendous support to Jane, the Board of Directors and you, our members. They have been key to the success of our efforts to date.

### Re-branding and Raising the Profile of OPA

We quickly found that, for a number of reasons, the OPA was being overlooked by government and by various stakeholders, across important sectors. It was time to re-brand and launch a campaign to raise our profile to ensure that we would be in a position to fulfill our advocacy roles. The campaign started with the commissioning of a new logo that was designed to be modern, crisp and easily recognizable. We then set out to develop a new website that is interactive, informative, and user-friendly. Our new website, which will be launching in early 2015, will allow online membership renewal and workshop registration, and has also been formatted for mobile devices. It will also host our new "member forums", which will replace the listserv, as well as a searchable member directory that will make finding a psychologist or psychological associate quick and easy.

The OPA also found its voice on social media. The OPA Twitter and LinkedIn accounts were launched, and we brought our Facebook page back to life. Through these platforms, government, media and members of the public actively engaged with the OPA. Using social media allow us to support important initiatives and to push our advocacy agenda publically. We made important contacts, and became involved in campaigns of importance to the people we serve. Most importantly, we alerted our friends, followers, and contacts about the work that we do and solutions that the OPA and psychologists and psychological associates can offer.

We hosted the first (of what will be an annual) reception at Queen's Park in February. This well-attended political event was intended to draw attention to the diverse services provided by psychologists and psychological associates in multiple environments. Our second one is in the planning stages for late February.

Jan and Jane made presentations about the OPA to graduate students and regional psychological groups across the province, and intend to continue with this in 2015. These events provide a great opportunity to let members, former members, and prospective members know more about our advocacy initiatives and the benefits of being a part of our professional association.

We developed a Media Contact List for reporters and journalists looking for individuals willing to address specific issues, or provide background and context. This has proven very successful, and we have been pleased to see so many OPA members in the news.

### Communication and Transparency

It was important to the Board that we do more to keep members informed about OPA's initiatives and, to that end, we started the monthly ONPsych NewsBriefs. We have also used email blasts and listserv posts to draw attention to important issues, upcoming events, and we responded to related queries with an immediacy that often times shocked our members, especially when the response came in the form of a personal email or telephone contact. More importantly, we sought opportunities for greater involvement of our members with committees, working groups, sections, and interest groups and encouraged our members to inform their peers about the OPA's progress.

### Membership Benefits

Membership in the OPA bestows upon us the knowledge that collective "we" has a strong voice in the province. Individually, we are like trees falling in the woods. No one hears the message no matter how sage it may be. Regardless of whether your primary practice is clinical or academic, it is at the provincial level that the important decisions impacting your practice occurs. The greatest benefit that you can receive is to know that your peers are joining with you in advocating on behalf of your profession.

That said, we are also working hard to identify other benefits for our members. In addition to the new *website-based member directory* that will be offered at no charge to all members who wish to take advantage of the program, we have been working to develop an enticing collection of benefits for our members. We partnered with CPA to offer an excellent *professional liability* insurance product from BMS. We chose to work with BMS because they made a number of other coverages available to our members that we've never had before. The OPA then partnered with BMS on a competitive *home/auto insurance* product, and we will be launching our *health benefits* program very soon. We also host an online *bookstore* where members can purchase books at reduced rates, and are looking to develop access to online continuing education opportunities at a discount. We are also putting the finishing touches on a program of discounts for services and supplies that we use daily in our practices (e.g., test materials, credit/debit terminals, business products, etc.).

In keeping with our mission and to address quality concerns, the OPA is developing a number of *practice guidelines* for members providing supervision, Insurer Examination services, custody and access assessments or the assessment and treatment of concussion, and military operational stress injuries and mental health issues. Providing guidance in these key areas is a major contribution to the patients we serve and a prime opportunity to decrease needless CPO complaints.

The Section on Psychology in Education (SecPE) continues to do great work as the Child/Adolescent Mental Health Strategy rolls out, and the Section on Independent Practice (SIP) was re-energized with a brand new executive. We are also rolling out our new Interest Groups, such as the Primary Care Interest Group. Members with shared interests can meet to discuss practice issues and support each other. We expect that the members of our interest groups will alert the Board to hot topics and issues that OPA should weigh in on. In addition, with support, they will develop guidelines and continuing education programs specifically geared to support their practice requirements.

### **Governance and Finances**

We have been busy aligning our governance structures with the new Not-For-Profit Act. The focus has been on supporting each Board member to excel in addressing their fiduciary responsibilities, and to redrafting our By-Laws and Policy and Procedures. Jan has implemented tighter controls in our financial processes and outsourced payroll. We have engaged the services of a new auditor.

In addition to our Audit and Finance Committee, Governance Committee and Executive Committee, the Board developed two new statutory committees (Communications and Member Services and the Programming Planning and Research). These committees have been given responsibility for moving specific initiatives forward and reporting to the Board. The functions of a number of “Task Forces” were folded into the statutory committees and others such as the Auto Task Force were given permanency as subcommittees. This has extended our reach and accomplishments by involving more members in OPA activities.

In June, we held a Strategic Planning Meeting where we renewed our Vision, Mission and Value statements and returned to OPA’s original Objects. We set out our priorities and goals for the next three years, and were thrilled to report that we had already made progress on or achieved each of them!

### **Government Relations and Advocacy Initiatives**

The OPA is committed to advocating for increased timely access to psychological services, indeed mental health services in general, and we present evidence of the short-term and long-term benefits of early and effective interventions in terms of the quality of life for individuals and their families, as well as overall cost reductions for the governments at all levels. We firmly believe that health human resources issues can be addressed by encouraging the hiring of psychologists and psychological associates, by obtaining prescriptive authority and the ability to complete and execute Form 1s, the granting of presumptive legislation for PTSD in First Responders, the provision of sessional fees to allow funded psychoeducational and neuropsychological assessments, to name only a few.

To this end, we have developed a number of proposals that are being considered by the Ministries of Children and Youth, Education, Health and Long-term Care, Labour, Community and Social Services, Community Safety and Correctional Services and Finance – and the Premier herself. We have been meeting with agencies such as the Office of the Children’s Advocate, the Office of the Children’s Lawyer, the Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario, the Ontario Medical Association, the Council of Regulated Healthcare Professional Associations, the WSIB, the

Financial Services Commission of Ontario, amongst others, to identify the important role that psychologists and psychological associates play in the system. Our message is simple: *“A referral for a physical problem is a referral for care. A referral for a mental disorder is a referral to a wait-list – and access to psychologists and psychological associates is the solution.”* 2014 was the year they listened. 2015 will be the year that appropriate actions will take place to better integrate the private and public systems and to increase the number of positions in the public sector for psychologists.

## **A Seat at the Table**

The OPA set out to increase our profile in the province, and we are pleased with our progress to date. It was important that we have a seat at the table when issues affecting both those we serve and the profession, in general, are being discussed. A year ago, we had to complain after the fact about not being invited to participate in major panels and committees. We are now involved with the Rehabilitation Care Alliance, the Think Tank on Senior’s Care, the OPSBA Coalition, the Children and Youth Mental Health Summit, Christine Elliot’s Mental Health Think Tank, the Council of Regulated Health Professional Associations, the MOHLTC Panel on the Future of Healthcare, the Primary Care Research Network, the Working Group on Adults with ASD, the Coalition of Child and Youth Survivors and the Special Needs Strategy Provider Network, amongst others. We bring a needed perspective to these committees and our voice is heard and acted upon.

## **Partnerships and Projects**

It has been a year of renewing relationships and developing partnerships. At every meeting at Queen’s Park, we heard how dismayed government was with the turf wars that seemed to be so very prevalent amongst mental health providers and the organizations that support them. Jane’s year as President began with a sincere desire to address some of the outstanding issues related to membership in the OPA. By-law changes were supported at the 2014 Annual General Meeting to afford full membership status to all psychological associates. We have been committed to developing strong and supportive relationships with our sister organizations, the College of Psychologists of Ontario, the Ontario Association of Psychological Associates, the Canadian Psychological Association and the Psychology Foundation of Canada.

The public outcry and media coverage over mental health issues in military and veteran populations prompted the OPA to partner with the TEMA Trust and the Public Services Health and Safety Association in a suicide prevention campaign, *You Are Not Alone*.

The recent publicity in regards to harassment and sexual assaults in the workplace and on College and University campuses has led to a partnership with Workright Solutions Inc. Discussions are currently underway with government to make their Harassment Education Advisory Response Team (HEART) program available more broadly throughout the province.

We have also discussed mutual concerns and joint projects with the Ontario Medical Association, the HIV/AIDS Network, the Ontario Brain Institute, Alzheimer’s Society of Ontario, the Psychology Foundation of Canada, the Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation, the Canadian Academy of Psychologists in Disability Assessment, and the Mental Health Commission of Canada, amongst others.

## **Continuing Education**

In the arena of public and continuing education, we have been working with various Veteran Associations and a number of active military personnel to heighten awareness of suicide prevention through the effective treatments of PTSD and other mental disorders. As a concrete example of this partnership, the OPA is working with them and the Canadian Forces to create a

CE workshop to train psychologists and psychological associates to fully understand military culture (a workplace like no other, especially during and after combat). This work meant that our members are being called upon more frequently than ever before to treat veterans and military personnel.

Similar work is underway with various First Responders (police, fire fighter, paramedics and 911 dispatchers), as well as correctional officers, to advocate for better access to psychological services. A workshop is being developed to train psychologists and psychological associates to understand the workplace culture of the police. Similar ones will follow to assist psychologists and psychological associates to meet the unique needs of other First Responders.

In addition, the Ontario Bar Association and Legal Aid Ontario are working hand-in-glove with the OPA to develop joint programs to address mental health problems amongst lawyers. The OPA is also working with both the OBA and Legal Aid Ontario to determine collaborative ways to better support individuals with mental health problems who enter the Justice system.

Look for the rollout of these workshops and the repeat of workshops that were developed and piloted in 2014. Our graduate student workshop, supervisory workshop and the telepsychology webinar program all received such positive evaluations that they will be repeated in 2015. And our ability to offer our programming via webinar is allowing more members than ever before to participate.

### **The 2015 Conference**

Lastly, we are extremely excited about our 2015 Annual Conference highlighting the excellent work of Ontario-based psychologists, psychological associates and students. All program submissions were peer-reviewed. We have some amazing keynote speakers, and our greatest concern is that the venue may not be large enough to accommodate all of our members who wish to attend. For those members that are used to registering late or on the day of the conference, we would like to suggest that you register as early as possible to avoid being disappointed. You will be invited to register online in the coming days.

To ensure that the OPA continues to grow and develop into an organization that has the ability to be in the big leagues, and as your personal contribution to your profession and your peers, please commit to talking just one psychologist, psychological associate, or student into joining the OPA in 2015.

We look forward to what this New Year has in store for the OPA and its members. The Board and staff would like to wish all of you a very healthy and happy 2015.



Dr. Jane Storrie, President



Jan Kasperski, Chief Executive Officer