



Hong Kong Neuropsychological Association

NeuroPsy Newsletter

December 2004

About Hong Kong Neuropsychological Association (HKNA)

The HKNA was established in October 1998. It aims to promote the advancement of knowledge, to encourage and facilitate clinical and theoretical research in neuropsychology in Hong Kong, and to promote and facilitate communication with relevant professional organizations within the local community, mainland and overseas. The activities of the Association include publication of newsletter, organization of interest/discussion groups, arranging seminars/workshops run by local and overseas speakers, and conducting research. Interested parties please fill in application form which can be obtained from the Association or downloaded at www.hkna.org/assets/HKNAform.pdf. For further information about the Association, please visit our website at www.hkna.org.

Chairperson

Ms. Sonia Chang

Vice-Chairperson

Dr. Mei-Chun Cheung

Treasurer

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Ms. Maggie Wong

Committee Member-at-Large

Prof. Agnes Chan

Dr. Alma Au

Ms. Yim-Chi Ho

Honorary Advisers

Dr. Marilyn Alberts

Prof. Helen Chiu

Dr. Dean Delis

Dr. Igor Grant

Dr. Patrick Li

Dr. David Salmon

Prof. Virginia

Edited by Ms. Sophia Sze

Past Event

An International Conference on Neuropsychology: Recent Advances in the East and West (9/12 – 12/12/2003)

In collaboration with the Department of Psychology of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the HKNA and other five organizing parties had successfully co-organized the first international conference on neuropsychology in Hong Kong. It has attracted over 200 participants from all over the world, including China, U.S.A., Taiwan, Japan and Europe. With the wide participation from professionals around the world, the conference was well received by the participants and has already achieved its goal of facilitating intellectual exchange of ideas in Neuropsychology between Asian and Western professionals, researchers and scholars.



The HKNA Update

New Board of Committee



A new board of executive committee has been formed with Ms. Sonia Chang being elected as the new chairperson and Dr. Mei-Chun Cheung as the vice-chairperson. With the change of committee members, the committee hopes to have more enthusiasm and initiative in the coming year.

Special News

Announcement of the Professional Link with the International Neuropsychological Society (INS) and the Special Privilege Offer of the Registration Fee

The HKNA has recently been honored the opportunity to establish a professional link with the INS webpage. In addition, HKNA members can enjoy the special privilege membership registration fee for attending the INS conference in future. The professional link with the INS represents not only the recognition of the HKNA on an international basis, but also provides the platform for future mutual communication of information and knowledge.



Chinese Board of Neuropsychology

The Chinese Board of Neuropsychology has recently been established. It aims at offering registration with professionally recognized credential and examinations for Asian scientists who have interest in studying and practising in Neuropsychology. The

HKNA has been invited to co-organize with the Board in assisting the preparation of examinations, and the design and logistics of various training programs and courses, which will be instructed by local and overseas experts in Neuropsychology. Further details will soon be updated at our webpage.



Good News!

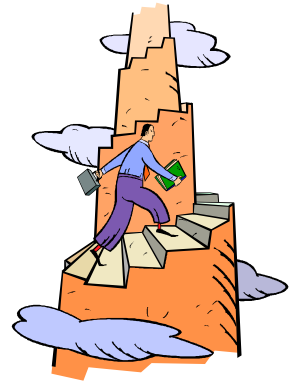
1. Congratulations to Professor Agnes S. Chan, Professor of Department of Psychology at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the founder of the HKNA, for being awarded the Early Career Award by the American Psychological Association in 2004. This represents an honorable recognition of her commitment, contribution, and achievement in the development of Neuropsychology, specifically for the Chinese population.
2. Professor Chan was invited by the National Academy of Neuropsychology (NAN) to hold a workshop at the 24th Annual Conference of NAN held in Seattle (Washington, U.S.A.) last month. The workshop, entitled "Neuropsychological assessment of Asian-Americans: Strategies, Approach, and Recent Empirical Developments", has attracted about 30 audience with excellent comments. The content of the workshop will soon be published in a journal later.



A Farewell Speech from Our Honorable Founder and Ex-Chairperson

~ By Professor Agnes S. Chan

The Hong Kong Neuropsychological Association has moved toward its 6th year. Being established in 1998 by a group of clinical psychologists who are interested in neuropsychology and with a vision of developing this field of specialization in Hong Kong, the association has gone through its sprouting stage. The number of members has increased slowly but surely for the past years, and the number of attendance for the seminars and conferences organized by the HKNA has been very encouraging. The significant role of the association as a bridge between the east and the west has been recognized by the American Psychological Association (APA) and the International Neuropsychological Society (INS). For instance, the website of the INS has established a link to that of the HKNA. I am particularly pleased that the INS has recognized the role of HKNA and offered our members to attend their annual conference by paying their membership registration fee.



The biggest function of this year probably is the international conference of neuropsychology that was jointly organized by the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the National Institute of Mental Health, the American Psychological Association, the International Neuropsychological Association in the United States, the Institute of Psychology and the Hushan Hospital in China. There were over 200 participants in this conference, and the workshops were very well received. The HKNA was an active organization in such function as inviting the speakers and organizing the social activities.

I believe the HKNA now has a solid foundation with both local and international recognition. She is now moving to a growing stage with the mission of improving the standard of neuropsychology in Hong Kong, and facilitating the development of this field of science in China. As the HKNA is growing up now, it should be a good time to change the team of leadership so that some new ideas and visions can be implemented to the association. It is my pleasure to have been the chairperson of the HKNA for the past 6 years, witnessing the establishment of the HKNA is one of my prides in life. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of committee for their effort to create the HKNA, and their patience on me. One of my biggest rewards for being the chairperson of the association is to establish friendship with the committee and to share our joy and crisis together with laughter and reason. I should thank all of them from the bottom of my heart. Last but not least, I am wishing all the best for the new leadership team.



Chinese Neuropsychologists in Different Parts of the World -- An Introduction & Reflection Sharing



Hong Kong



Alma Au, Ph.D. (Clinical Psychologist)
Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Hong Kong

I was initially trained in Clinical Psychology (CP) at the University of Hong Kong. I then started my CP career working with children at the Hong Kong Christian Service and then working with adults at the Kwai Chung Hospital. After moving to live in London with my husband, I started to work with older adults and in the field of neuropsychology. I was fortunate enough to be employed as the Principal Clinical Psychologist in some well-established teaching hospitals including Guy's and St Mary's. I also received post qualification training in Clinical Neuropsychology at the Institute of Psychiatry of the University of London (the only place to have such training in the UK at that time). After returning to Hong Kong in 1995, I continued with my work in the United Christian Hospital and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

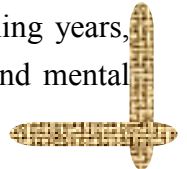
Though I started off primarily as a clinician, I would like to believe that most of my actions have been theoretically sound. I consider myself to be very lucky when I met Agnes Chan at the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1996. Being a devoted researcher herself, she is really the person who has inspired me to realize one of my dreams of integrating clinical experience with research. My work with her resulted in publications in the Journal of the International Neuropsychological Society (JINS) and the Journal of Clinical and Experimental Neuropsychology (JCEN) on the episodic and semantic memory of Alzheimer's dementia.

I think working as a clinician like being tossed around in the sea of seeing real people on a day to day basis, one is constantly struggling on how to apply apparently neat textbook models to deal with the mess of life in general. The mess includes not only patients' presenting problems but also the psychologists' own weaknesses and blind spots. It is, in some ways, harder to get away from these struggles when you need to solve problems with people but not on the computer. There are also many other overriding issues like what the work institution expects from psychologists and how psychologists would like to develop as a profession, not to mention the fact that many other professions are catching up fast in the basic assessment and counseling skills. In general, psychologists tend to take pride in their conceptualization abilities in providing principles and rationales. However, if high-sounding words cannot be put into action, they would only generate disappointment and frustration.

For neuropsychology to extend its influence beyond the ivory tower, I think it is important for the psychologists not only to attend to cognition but also to emotional adjustment and everyday adaptation. My many struggles resulted in more recent publications on the quality of life and cognitive-behavioral treatment for adult patients in epilepsy. I am grateful to Tatia Lee who really started the work on various areas of epilepsy and also to Patrick Leung who helped with the

statistics. My most recent project is on the neuropsychology of HIV/AIDS. Funded by the AIDS Trust Fund, the project will take place at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital from 2004 to 2007 with Robert Heaton as the advisor.

Other delightful projects (or “messy areas”) of my life include a three-year-old son, a husband to whom I have been married for fifteen years and an eighty-year-old father. I also like to explore various models of psychotherapy, including the not so evidence-based ones. I think that many compartments of my brain are fully utilized. I hope I will age slowly. So, for the coming years, apart from finding spiritual meaning in life, another major task is to delay physical and mental deterioration.



Australia

I have been working as a neuropsychologist at the School of Applied Psychology in the Griffith University since 1990. The Griffith University is one of the three universities in Brisbane, the capital city of Queensland and the Sunshine State of Australia. At the university, I have been responsible for teaching, researching and supervising neuropsychology. In this short article, I would like to share with you my journey as a student, teacher and researcher in my area of specialization.



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The first time I heard about the term “neuropsychology” was in 1983. I was then an undergraduate student at the Massey University in Palmerston North, New Zealand. One of my lecturers, Dr. Ken McFarland, introduced me to this field. Initially, I was not interested in the study of brain-behavior relationships because I was heavily influenced by the ideas of behaviorists such as Watson and Skinner. The situation changed when I undertook an Honors project with Dr. McFarland to evaluate the utility of the then newly developed Luria-Nebraska Neuropsychological Battery (Golden, Purish, & Hammek, 1980). I was fascinated and intrigued by the writings of the brilliant Russian neuropsychologist, Alexander Luria, and his idea of the hierarchically organized functional systems.

At the end of my Honors year, when I heard that Dr. McFarland was moving back to his home country -- Australia, I decided to follow him and pursue my postgraduate study in neuropsychology. Thanks to his support, I was accepted as a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Queensland. For my research, I decided to examine the effects of closed head injury on attention because in the mid 80s

the extent and impact of head injury in western societies was starting to be recognized. Dr. McFarland was an excellent supervisor. Not only did he teach me about neuropsychology, research methodology, statistics and writing, he also encouraged me to publish my work during my candidature. After a few of my studies were accepted for publication, I was captivated and determined to pursue a research career.

Fortunately for me, when I was finishing my doctoral study, the Griffith University started a new psychology school and I was hired as a tutor. It was at this time that I met my second mentor, Professor John O’Gorman. Even though he is not a neuropsychologist, Professor O’Gorman has been very supportive of my research interests and ideas. He has provided me with many opportunities and sage advice. He is also a fine and skillful writer and from his feedback I have learned much about scientific writing.

During the last 15 years, I have really enjoyed working as a neuropsychologist in a university environment because of the flexibility it affords me to work on projects or areas in which I have an interest. I have expanded my research areas to include areas such as memory and executive functions. I have also developed an interest in the construction of neuropsychological instruments. For example, I have designed a test that uses Chinese characters to assess visual memory and learning in individuals who have not learned the Chinese language (Shum, O’Gorman & Eadie, 1999). I argued that these characters are better stimuli for assessing visual memory than the commonly used geometric figures because they are relatively complex, unfamiliar and not easily verbalisable. Other aspects of my job that I enjoy include teaching and supervising students who are keen to learn and traveling to other parts of the world to meet and exchange research ideas with other neuropsychologists.



I appreciate this opportunity to share with you my reflections from the perspective of a neuropsychologist of Chinese descent working and practicing in the United States. By way of introduction, allow me to share my professional background. I received my Ph.D. in 1982 from the University of Southern California (Los Angeles, California). I later completed a postdoctoral fellowship in clinical neuropsychology at the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry,



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in New York. I am currently an associate professor of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation at the University of Rochester, and the Director of Neuropsychology at Unity Health System in Rochester, New York. My clinical work includes the evaluation and treatment of cognitive and behavioral problems resulting from various brain injuries and other neurological disorders, such as head trauma, brain tumor, stroke, and dementia. My clinical and research emphases include mild head injury/postconcussive syndrome, brain injury, and cross-cultural factors in neuropsychological assessment and intervention. I am privileged to be the current co-chair of the American Psychological Association Div. 40's (Clinical Neuropsychology) Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee, and am a member of National Academy of Neuropsychology's Cultural and Diversity Task Force.

With respect to my personal background, the most relevant portion that I would like to share here is that although I was American born and raised, I am quite proud of the rich heritage that has been passed on to me by my parents, who were from China. Like many of the early immigrants from China to the United States, they were originally from the Toisan region of Guangdong. Thus, I grew up here in America with a somewhat bicultural perspective. Looking back, this background has influenced me greatly both in my personal and professional spheres, coloring the way in which I view and approach the world.

Professionally, both as an academician and as a clinician, my strong familiarity with and interest in Asian culture (at least compared to my Western colleagues) has been a source of satisfaction and frustration to me. On the positive side, I have received plenty of referrals to see Asian patients from colleagues who feel that I might be in a better position to assess or treat these individuals due to my knowledge and familiarity with Eastern culture. Colleagues will seek my consultation to help them help their Asian clients. Of course, it is always rewarding to be able to help people with what may be your own unique blend of skills and background. I also find very satisfying the many opportunities that I have had to write about and educate North American neuropsychologists about working with Asian patients. On the other hand, my frustrations in this area stem from what I see as an acute shortage of academic and clinical research and understanding of the neuropsychological evaluation of persons of Asian descent. This impacts my work and that of my colleagues, and more importantly, handicaps our ability to properly serve our patients. I have tried to convince my colleagues here in America that this problem will only increase unless we devote more attention towards good clinical research in this area, as the Asian population in America continues to grow at an increasing rate. However discouraging as it may be sometimes, I am actually quite optimistic about the future. This is due, in no small part, to increasing research of excellent quality in neuropsychology emerging from Asia, and especially Hong Kong. My strong desire and goal is to collaborate with neuropsychologists in Asia in solid clinical research that would help making neuropsychology more inclusive and applicable to patients of Asian descent.

