

## A Primer on Common Practices in Clinical Neuropsychology

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*Specialty Competencies in Clinical Neuropsychology: A Primer on Common Practices*, by Gregory J. Lamberty & Nathaniel W. Nelson. 2012. New York: Oxford University Press, 194 pp., \$49.99, (PB).

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The monograph entitled *Specialty Competencies in Clinical Neuropsychology: A Primer on Common Practices* is part of a series of books on specialty competencies whose other volumes cover counseling psychology, school psychology, organizational and business consulting psychology, geropsychology, forensic psychology, couple and family psychology, and clinical child and adolescent psychology. The book is organized in five parts, beginning with a chapter on conceptual and scientific foundations of clinical neuropsychology and a chapter on the professional practice of clinical neuropsychology. The subsequent three parts pertain to functional competencies, including "Assessment," "Report Writing," and "Intervention," followed by a final section entitled "Foundational Competencies." The chapters are brief, totaling 123 pages, not counting appendices.

Part I begins with a chapter on conceptual and scientific foundations and is suitable as a very brief overview for the novice reader. The chapter on professional practice includes a history of major neuropsychology organizations and summarizes the Houston Conference on Specialty Education and Training in Clinical Neuropsychology (Hannay, 1998). Professional practice itself is briefly summarized in the final five pages of the chapter, and as such receives cursory treatment. Part II, "Functional Competency-Assessment," contains a brief chapter on assessment strategies, covering such topics as fixed batteries, the Boston process approach, and flexible batteries. The chapter also includes a table with a selection neuropsychological tests categorized by cognitive domain. The subsequent chapter on case formulation in clinical neuropsychology focuses on assessment of symptom validity and response bias, cognitive functioning, and personality and emotional functioning. The authors also discuss some basic principles on the use of norms in assessment while acknowledging variation across practitioners on how scores may be interpreted.

In Part III, a single chapter is included that covers the functional competency of "report writing." The chapter provides details on the typical sections and content of a neuropsychological evaluation report, with acknowledgment that the format can vary across settings and practitioners. Part IV also contains a single chapter that covers both intervention and consultation in clinical neuropsychology. It is not surprising that the intervention section is very brief owing to the traditional and continued prominence of assessment in neuropsychology practice. Included as intervention strategies are patient feedback, family consultation, cognitive rehabilitation, and psychotherapy with cognitively impaired individuals.

In Part V, this foundational competencies section includes a chapter on ethics and a final chapter on future directions. The ethics chapter hits on the most crucial elements of ethical practice in clinical neuropsychology. Regarding future directions, the authors address the increasing importance of board certification in neuropsychology practice. Advocacy is specifically covered in the last chapter, consistent with the addition of competencies in advocacy that are part of the latest iteration of the competencies benchmarks document for professional psychology practice (American Psychological Association [APA], 2012a; APA, 2012b). Finally, the book has a large group of Appendices, which allows the reader to easily reference previously published documents related to education, training, specialization, and practice. Appendices include early education and credentialing guidelines (International Neuropsychological Society-Division 40, 1987), our most recent consensus training guidelines from the Houston Conference (Hannay, 1998), definitions of a clinical neuropsychologist published by APA Division 40 (Division 40, 1989) and the National Academy of Neuropsychology (NAN, 2001), and practice guidelines of the American Academy of Clinical Neuropsychology (AACN, 2007), among others.

The most useful function of the book is in orienting those who may have limited familiarity with clinical neuropsychology to the nuts and bolts of its common practice. Additionally, the authors make judicious reference to essential classic and recent publications related to clinical neuropsychology practice that may be helpful to readers who are unfamiliar with those resources.

If the book has a major weakness, it is in its focus on skill-based or applied competencies and a relative lack of discussion of knowledge-based competencies. For example, there is broad agreement that competent practice in clinical neuropsychology requires specialized knowledge in functional neuroanatomy, neurological and other conditions that affect cognitive functioning, and basic knowledge of neuroimaging and other neurodiagnostic techniques. In the Houston Conference Policy Statement (Hannay, 1998), these and other areas of knowledge are detailed in a separate "Knowledge base" section. Regarding general psychology practice, knowledge-based competencies are referenced in past (Fouad et al., 2009) and current (APA, 2012b) competency benchmarks. Additionally, knowledge-based competencies are clearly specified in an application of the competency model to Clinical Health psychology (France et al., 2008). Although the authors at times make general reference to the clinical neuropsychology's scientific

knowledge base, a large domain of knowledge-based competencies receive minimal coverage.

In summary, what the reader will find in this book is a basic introduction to the most common activities of practicing neuropsychologists, interspersed with commentary by the authors and discussion of diversity of approaches within our practice. For those times when we may fail to see the forest for the trees, the book reminds us of some of the basic tenets of practice. Furthermore, its reference list serves as a helpful launching point for those interested in an overview of clinical neuropsychology practice and some of the major ways in which such practice is distinct from that of other specialties, with the exception of a collection of “neuro-oriented” knowledge-based competencies such as those discussed above.

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