

LETTERS

Retired colonel says APA slandered military psychologists

Editor's note: Kathy Platoni, Psy.D., a retired U.S. Army colonel, provided this copy of a letter she has sent to the APA:

I wish to tender my resignation from the American Psychological Association (APA) as immediately as possible. I have been a member since 1978, but can no longer be a part of an organization that perpetrates lies and vitriol against military psychologists, of which I am one, and seeks to cause devastation to them personally and professionally on the basis of flagrant untruths.

I refuse to support an organization that treats its military psychologists as enemies of the state. The actions of APA are despicable, unconscionable and based solely on the false findings of an unprovoked witch hunt. The choice of remaining in APA or choosing not to defecate on my 35-year military career is an easy one.

The Hoffman Report, a supposed independent review of psychologists involved in national security investigations, is nothing more than a vile prosecutorial brief laden with blatant lies, distortions, fabrications and defamatory statements. The findings contained in this report are completely and absolutely unsubstantiated by any shred of evidence. This is far beyond insulting and offensive to those of us who have ever worn the uniform, especially as the accused labored intensively to assure that cruel, inhumane, degrading or abusive techniques remain entirely prohibited. This is no less than slanderous.

The opposition of all of military psychologists to abuse and torture of detainees during national security interrogations is unmistakable. We have always been and will continue to stand as staunch opponents of any harsh or abusive treatment of any human being, regardless of circumstances, as we uphold only the very highest standards of professionalism as we are sworn to do by solemn oath. I stand among those who are shocked and horrified to find that we are not only perceived, but labeled as this nation's Dr. Mengeles. The fact that we willingly signed up to

die for the citizens of these United States of America, the very most noble form of patriotism, has been rendered meaningless by the actions of APA.

I regret that the reprehensible actions of the American Psychological Association leave me no choice but to remove myself from its ranks.

Nevertheless, I am ethically bound to do so.

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COL (Ohio Military Reserve)
State Defense Forces

Life status member says stick with APA

Regarding Dr. Don M. Hartsough's resignation from APA (TNP, January/February, 2016, p. 13), I agree the Hoffman Report is a document some members of APA would use to justify their resignation from the association. Dr. Hartsough "was alarmed and disappointed" after reading the report, prompting him to resign from APA after more than a half century with outstanding contributions to APA.

Resigning from APA based on the finding of that report is not the best way to approach this controversial document. This is the time when APA needs its members, and particularly life status member (e.g., Dr. Hartsough), to provide their thoughts regarding how the APA should approach that controversial document and prevent a similar situation in the associations' future.

I also have life status membership at APA, I also read the entire report, and I also felt "alarmed and disappointed" with its content. But I am still an active APA member and will never resign from this association, because I also felt that this is the moment when the association would need me to re-establish its prior positive image in the general public and to ensuring that, despite that report, the APA is still the most influential psychological organization in the entire world.

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Member, Texas

The wounded psychologist: Adverse effects from a licens

By Robert H. Woody, Ph.D., Sc.D., JD

Professionalism is founded on the concept of benefiting society and the specific persons who receive services under the aegis of a scholarly or learned discipline. Certainly psychologists are dedicated to helping clients and patients improve their psychological health.

Human foibles may lead to faulty professional services that render few benefits and perhaps even inflict harm. Clients with a character or other mental disorder may falsely allége wrongdoing by a psychologist.

In the 1970s, a quest for greater financial revenues and elevated status in the health care professions led mental health practitioners to champion licensing. Psychologists often failed to recognize that, for the government and legal system, the purpose of licensing was to provide safeguards for the service recipients from allegedly unqualified practitioners. Now decades later, every state jurisdiction regulates psychology via its state board of psychology licensing.

Public consumers are assiduously protected. Moreover, the administrative codes, policies and rules applied by licensing agencies are commonly structured to maximize benefits for consumers, with the result at times creating "an uneven playing field." Defending against a consumer complaint reflects questionable regard for the licensee's right to Constitutionally protected due process and equal protection.

Unlike in court, which would require that allegations be "definite and certain," in regulatory processing, it is common for the licensing agency to proceed with an investigation and possible discipline based on ambiguous allegations fostered by a consumer's negative motives. Some regulatory sources, such as the prosecuting attorneys for a board of psychology, get their promotions and salary increases by "convictions" (i.e., imposing discipline), not by adherence to due process and equal protection.

In my article, "Psychological Safety for Mental Health Practitioners: Suggestions from a Defense Lawyer" (appearing soon in *Psychological Injury and the Law*), I emphasize that a substantial number of regulatory complaints against mental health practitioners contain false information, reflect wrongful client motives and are unfairly processed either consciously or unconsciously by

regulatory agencies. The psychologists believe they are left to suffer psychological consequences.

For various reasons, including confidentiality and reluctance to have dealt with a client who is impossible to investigate, the number of complaints investigated by a licensing board is limited.

In my book, *Mental Health Law* (2013), I provide information and a board action checklist.

There is a growing concern that the protection can be in essentially a psychologist. (It reminds me of the "when parents divorce" scenario.)

There is a client complaint that can affect a psychologist's ability to work and career satisfaction. A decrease in income has been some success in a licensing case.

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To avoid a substantial are: (1) avoid child custody engaging in ing and struc patients with (e.g., sociops and psychop (3) not allow (4) keeping j data, treatme (5) making r unmanageab operating by

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