

Insights from the Margins of Thought and Experience

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Emerging out of the cold and monochromatic cloak of winter, the bright colors of spring offer hope of renewal and vibrant new life. But for all its beauty, the weather in this season is challenging—chaotic, unpredictable—symbolic of the uncertainty inherent in most transitions. What anchors us during these uncomfortable and challenging periods, when snow covers new bulbs just as we feel confident to pack away our sweaters? The humanities offer us lifelines of history, language, poetry, and art that celebrate the persistence of the seasons and remind us how others have navigated similar feelings of doubt and ambiguity.

In our current age, many lament their struggles to maintain emotional depth in the midst of socioeconomic and political uncertainties. Yet, historians remind us this concern is not new, but a common thread of discourse inherent in all societal structures, from the periods of Aristotle and Socrates to the 21st century. Throughout time, the humanities have provided a framework not just to weather seasonal shifts but to celebrate our shared stories of meaning-making.

Insights From the Margins of Thought and Experience

Although change may be the only true constant, radical upheaval is often sparked at the margins of our lived experiences. Agents of change are frequently those individuals or communities who creatively and courageously delve into the unknowable, searching for a new perspective. Powerful drivers of shifting perspectives are often uncovered through critical examination of theory, practices, or professions, challenging the status quo with a goal toward transformation.

Within the rehabilitation field, the brave questions being asked today from the margins of humanitarian thought might include:

- Are our current practices in research and teaching adequate to sustain our rehabilitation professions through a progressively complex, globally inter-related, and dynamic system of care?
- To effect change as teachers, how do we nourish discernment in our students, and in ourselves?

- “Will we [the physical therapy profession] ever look outward?” Gail Jensen passionately posed this question after the tragic shootings at Parkland High School in Florida (written communication, February 2018). By elevating gun violence as a public health concern demanding our response, Jensen implores us to “find a way to look outward as a moral community and use our collective voices to advance the health of the nation.”
- How can we also look inward, to move past our desensitizing language of healthcare, and re-infuse humility, humanity, and empathy into our patient interactions? Amanda LaLonde explores this question in our current issue (*JHR*, Spring 2018.)

There are no simple answers to the difficult questions, such as these, that we face as individuals and as rehabilitation professions across time; yet, it is in the asking where the opportunities for progress lie. Certainly, one of the defining characteristics of a truly effective educator is the ability to teach students how to ask good, genuinely curious, and deeply thoughtful questions. Perhaps as a collection of rehabilitation science professions, we can open the door to the “critical theory teacher” and learn that discomfort and struggle need not be perceived negatively, but simply as a sign of living at the edge of our threshold of change, leaning into the questions themselves.

A New Platform for Critical Thinking

To create a space for this type of progressive questioning, we are excited to offer a new submission category to *JHR*: Critical Research and Perspectives. Co-edited by Jenny Setchell, PhD, BScPT, and Barbara Gibson, PhD, BMR(PT), this section will address research and scholarship articles that employ *critical*

perspectives on rehabilitation. In particular, we are seeking submissions that apply critical, post-structural, or postmodern theories including original research, thought pieces, and theoretical discussions of the philosophical basis of rehabilitation practices, education, and/or research. We are honored to have these two internationally recognized scholars join our Editorial Board!

Dr. Setchell is a research fellow in international conjoint positions at the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, The University of Queensland (Australia); and Bloorview Research Institute, Holland Bloorview Hospital, University of Toronto (Canada). She co-founded the international Critical Physiotherapy Network (CPN: <https://criticalphysio.net>) with Dr. Gibson and Dr. Dave Nicholls (Auckland University of Technology). Dr. Gibson, associate professor at the University of Toronto, is a physical therapist and bioethicist and holds the Bloorview Children’s Hospital Foundation Chair in Childhood Disability Studies with the Bloorview Research Institute in Canada. She has led the production of several books aimed at transforming rehabilitation practices, including *Rethinking Rehabilitation Theory and Practice* (2015, co-editor); and *Rehabilitation: A Post-Critical Approach* (2016). She is the lead editor on *Manipulating Practices: A Critical Physiotherapy Reader* (2018).

In the inaugural article in our new Critical Rehabilitation Research and Scholarship section, Dr. Gibson discusses her book, *Rehabilitation: A Post-Critical Approach*, an artfully explained introductory text for the rehabilitation science audience, designed to help them engage with critical social theories, providing a framework for thinking through the application of these ideas to research and practice.

Advancing the Concept of Healing

In this Spring 2018 issue of *JHR*, we are pleased to share articles that explore a wide range of creative thinking, to offer new insights into the concept of healing itself.

- From our Historical Perspectives in Art section, Rebecca R. Stone, PhD, provides a sensitive interpretation of ancient Central and South American artifacts, exploring how other cultures may view those living with disabilities in contrast to our current medical and societal perspectives.
- Sarah Smith, SPT, and Kathy Lee Bishop, PT, DPT, report on *Art with Heart*, a creative program initiated by artist Wayland Moore following his own triple-bypass surgery, to address the healing of the minds and souls of recovering patients.
- Professor Julie Hengst, PhD, CCC-SLP, reviews Diane Ackerman's book, *One Hundred Names for Love: A Stroke, a Marriage, and the Language of Healing*, which chronicles how the author responded to her husband's aphasia and imaginatively engaged in his rehabilitation.
- In a tender account of his family's fostering and later adoption of a physically traumatized infant born with neonatal abstinence syndrome, Chad Jackson, PT, DPT, OCS, details how a healthcare provider's empathy, empowerment, and connection form a crucial aspect of the healing process.
- Partnering with Dr. George Huba, authors Phillip Kellogg, SPT, and Ali Nogi, PT, DPT, present an overview of the practice of Mind Mapping—a visual-thinking tool used for organizing information—illustrating the technique's application in healthcare and rehabilitation.

- Jennifer Hastings, PT, PhD, NCS, offers a descriptive study of the lived experience and psychosocial implications of an individual with tetraplegia who developed new-onset neuromuscular scoliosis and sought non-invasive treatment with a wheelchair seating specialist.
- Eileen P. Anderson-Fye, EdD, and colleagues review the lessons learned in the development of a pilot undergraduate survey course offering an overview of interdisciplinary approaches to medicine and health across the humanities and social sciences, and encouraging unique insights in students about the nature of the healing process.
- Through an original poem and commentary, Amanda LaLonde, PT, DPT, GCS, captures the feelings of frightened, defiant patients in an impersonal healthcare system, encouraging us to be mindful of the impact of language and how our words create opportunities to strengthen our interconnectedness and humanism in the therapeutic relationship.

Winner of the CHEP-*JHR* Essay Contest

Congratulations to Creighton Doctor of Physical Therapy Program graduate student Hayley Rieger, the winner of the inaugural physical therapy student essay contest co-sponsored by the ACAPT Consortium for the Humanities, Ethics, and Professionalism (CHEP) and *JHR*! This writing competition is designed to encourage deep thinking by students about the role and value of humanities, ethics, and professionalism in academic training and professional life. The first in an annual series, the CHEP-*JHR* essay contest offers a creative opportunity to ignite critical reflection in PT students across the nation to support holistic approaches to patient care. This year's prompt

centered around the importance of getting to know our patients as individuals and creating a meaningful connection as a critical component of excellence in clinical practice. Students were asked to “write about a time when learning a non-medical piece of information led to an improved healthcare outcome and/or patient experience.” As CHEP steering committee member Donna Smith reflects: “Ms. Rieger’s vivid description of her experience with her patient underscores the transformative power of the therapeutic relationship...approaching our patients as partners in the healing process and through the lens of humility that allows their wholeness as human beings to be seen. Her words, ‘...she could teach me the lifelong lesson that helping someone to reach their full potential means hearing the song in their heart and finding a way to sing it back...’ expressed a simple but salient truth:

we must always value our patients’ personhood and the gifts that arise from the shared experience of healing.” Essays from the two additional finalists, Mercedes Aguirre and Becky Mercurio, will be published in the Fall 2018 issue of *JHR*.

Thank you for joining us. We hope you enjoy this issue of *JHR*, and find true insights within it to share with your community.

If you are interested in submitting your work to *JHR*, please review our *Submission Guidelines* and *Frequently Asked Questions* sections. If you are considering being a reviewer, please contact Dr. Sarah Blanton: follow the *Contact* link, indicate the content area you are interested in reviewing, and attach your CV.



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