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# THE CPPA NEWSLETTER

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2008 (1) January

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## A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Several CPPA members met with State Senator Jake Corman in his Bellefonte office recently concerning a piece of legislation which could impact psychologists throughout Pennsylvania. The legislation concerns limiting the requirement many insurance companies have to submit requests for reauthorization of outpatient sessions, such as after each six to eight sessions, in order to get continued payment of services. The practice of reauthorizations does nothing to ensure quality of treatment; typically, no substantial clinical information is conveyed in requests. Instead, the practice divides up administrative costs for both practitioners and the insurance company, costs which ultimately are borne by our clients. Worse than this, administrative mixups can sometimes interfere with treatment if reauthorizations are not processed in a timely way and our clients have to delay getting treatments as a result.

The Pennsylvania Psychological Association has been active in advancing legislation to limit the practice of reauthorizations. The efforts of PPA resulted this past summer in successful passage of a bill in the State House of Representative concerning reauthorizations, House Bill 1000. In order to become law, however, the bill needs to be introduced into and pass the State Senate. Senator Corman is important in this respect since he sits on a committee which has responsibility for legislation concerning insurance companies.

Senator Corman is a legislator who has been interested in and supportive of mental health issues. He is open in sharing the impact that mental illness has had on his family through the depression of his sister. During the meeting that our CPPA members had recently with him concerning limiting reauthorization requirements, Senator Corman was sympathetic and understanding, and offered to bring the matter to his Committee Chair to see if House Bill 1000 could be brought into the Committee and before the Senate for consideration.

If Senator Corman does indeed move this piece of legislation forward, and if that legislation is ultimately enacted, then the efforts of CPPA will have had an important impact. The support of each member of CPPA will be critical, however, in at least two regards.

## LAST ISSUE?...

*If you have not paid your 2008 CPPA membership dues, this will be your last newsletter!*

*CPPA membership is from January 1 to December 31. If you are not sure of your status, please feel free to call Chloe House, Membership Chair, to check your membership.*

*Your membership helps us to continue the newsletter, the expanding webpage, and continuing education workshops.*

The first regard concerns legislative alerts. As a piece of legislation moves through a legislative body, you may receive an alert to phone, email, or send a letter to your legislator. CPPA has developed an email listserv to notify each of you about important events and general information, as well as alerts, such as impending legislation. If and when you receive a legislative alert, from CPPA or from APA or PPA, **PLEASE RESPOND WITH ACTION**. Sam Knapp from PPA assures that mail and calls from constituents' house have a significant and influential impact on legislators. And CPPA, with 70 members, constitutes an important body of constituents that can and should influence concerns with our local legislators. As legislation concerning limiting reauthorization requirements advances, you will be receiving alerts from PPA and CPPA, and it will be important to respond.

The second regard concerning the support of each of you as members is renewal of your membership in CPPA for 2008 with the application enclosed in this newsletter. As psychologists, we and our clients are beneficiaries of the institutional efforts of our professional organizations, from APA to PPA and including our own CPPA. The efforts of the executive board of CPPA, which is largely volunteer, are aimed at providing opportunities for professional fellowship as well as quality professional growth and education. CPPA also endeavors to foster community awareness of psychology. The benefits from these efforts may not always be experienced immediately by the individual CPPA member, but hopefully benefit the profession of psychology and other health care professionals, as well as the environment of care for the people we work with. We look forward to your continued membership.

*John Erickson*

**2007-2008 CPPA  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

PRESIDENT	JOHN ERICKSON	364-2161
PRESIDENT-ELECT	SEAN LUKENS	234-3464
PAST PRESIDENT	MAROLYN MORFORD	861-3300
SECRETARY	VIBHA LAL	861-1233
TREASURER	JENNIFER HARP	234-3464
MEMBERSHIP	CHLOE HOUSE	234-3464
ETHICS CHAIR	ALLAN ELFANT	234-8011

PUBLICITY CHAIR

OPEN— HERE IS YOUR OPPORTUNITY!

**PROCEDURE TO REDUCE HEALTH CARE  
COSTS DOES JUST THE OPPOSITE**

A discussion regarding House Bill 1000

Problem:

The cost of insuring and providing health care to Pennsylvania citizens continues to rise.

Part of the problem:

Health Maintenance Organizations and behavioral or mental health subcontractors, while originally created to rein in costs, have become part of the problem. Administrative costs for health insurance can top 50 percent of the premium that means that *less than 50 percent of a citizen's health insurance pays for health services* and the rest pays to support HMOs and insurance subcontractors.

Discrimination against mental health care:

Although an insurance plan might allow for 26 mental health visits per year, one of the activities of HMOs and other managed care organizations is to require "authorizations" prior to and throughout receiving mental health services. In fact, the managed care organization will deny payment to the insured (or the provider) unless prior authorization has occurred. These are then repeated periodically, anywhere from every four to eight sessions of outpatient treatment.

**CPPA Executive Committee Meetings  
Saturdays, 9:30 a.m.**

February 16, 2008

March 22, 2008

Sunbridge

320 Rolling Ridge Drive  
State College, PA 16801

Prior authorizations waste money:

One report documented that more than 50 percent of health insurance premiums for outpatient mental health are spent on administrative costs: Activities needed to submit, process, store, and retrieve authorizations for treatment. Further, stories abound of managed care organizations and subcontractors losing the requests, denying otherwise "clean claims," or forcing clients who go "out of network" to lose reimbursement or spend much time trying to obtain what is stated in their policies.

...and interfere with client treatment:

Authorizations do nothing to improve the quality of health care. Outcomes for treatment are not different, comparing prior authorized treatment vs. free access treatment. And most requests are approved. So how do the authorization requests function? They serve to slow the payment process and limit services covered by the client's policy, interrupting their needed treatment and support.

What factors affect costs?

Pennsylvania data show that use is determined mostly by copay amounts and needs of the client. Those with high copays tend to use fewer services; those with more serious concerns use more services, regardless of copay. Authorizations have no systemic impact on utilization.

What we're asking:

The bottom line is that managed care authorizations waste PA citizens' money and make it harder for them to receive the consistent treatment they contracted for. The Pennsylvania House of Representatives, recognizing the wastefulness of this procedure, has drafted legislation restricting authorizations for outpatient mental health services to one per episode of treatment. We would appreciate any action initiated and supported in the Senate.

**PPA Website**

Pennsylvania Psychological Association's website is full of information to help make CE and professional practice easier. If you are interested, check out <http://www.papsy.org/>.

Membership ([www.papsy.org/membership/index.htm](http://www.papsy.org/membership/index.htm)) offers you many benefits including their daily posted listserv.

This listserv provides a forum for topic discussion, client referrals, and program announcements. It is also a great way to obtain the support and advice of your peer in this sometimes difficult field. If you are already a member and wish to join the listserv, contact Iva Brimmer, PPA Member Services, [Iva@papsy.org](mailto:Iva@papsy.org).

# The Power of Videogames: Pros and Cons

*presented by*

**Marolyn Morford, Ph.D.**

**Saturday, April 5, 2008**

**at Celebration Hall, State College, PA**

## **Description of Presentation**

Video games are everywhere: in our homes, cars, schools, waiting rooms. They are used by adults and children, some as young as two years of age. Combined video and computer game use by children now exceeds television time. This talk will explain the powerful appeal of video games and the effects on children's development, both negative and positive, and of the time spent on these games.

## **Learning Objectives**

At the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:

- 1) identify the physical and psychological characteristics that draw people to video games.
- 2) understand five concepts and vocabulary specific to video gaming.
- 3) understand the literature on videogames and aggression.
- 4) identify two negative effects of video games on children/adolescents.
- 5) identify two positive effects of video games on children /adolescents.
- 6) identify the important role adults have to play regarding this medium.

9:00 am to 10:30 am: Psychological aspects of video gaming. Types of games, including examples and demonstrations.

10:30 am to 10:45 am: Break

10:45 am to 11:15 am: Video games and aggression. Skill development and prosocial behavior.

11:15 am to 12:00 pm: Influencing the medium for the good: The role of the psychologist; the role of the parent

12:00 pm to 12:15 pm: Evaluations.

## **Biography of Presenter**

Marolyn Morford received a B.A. in French Language and Literature, then became less quirky and more practical, pursuing her Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in Educational Psychology, Committee on Child Development. With clinical training in hospital, community, and school contexts, she is licensed in Pennsylvania as a psychologist, and listed in the National Health Register of Service Providers in Psychology. She has over 25 years of experience working with children and their families as well as young adults. Besides her clinical practice, at the Center for Child and Adult Development in State College, she enjoys consulting with schools, groups, and individuals providing direct care, and giving presentations to professional and community groups to increase awareness of child development, behavior, and emotional health needs.

She testified in 2006 before the Pennsylvania House of Representatives Children & Youth Committee on the psychological effects of video games on children and is currently part of the Pennsylvania Joint State Government Commission's Task Force on Violent Interactive Video Games.

## **Continuing Education Credit**

Psychologists will receive 3 hours of continuing education credit for attending this program, which is sponsored by the **Central Pennsylvania Psychological Association (CPPA)**. CPPA is approved by the **American Psychological Association** to sponsor continuing education for psychologists. CPPA maintains responsibility for this program and its content. The program must be attended in its entirety; no credit for partial attendance will be awarded.

**Licensed social workers, clinical social workers and professional counselors** will receive 3 hours of continuing education credit for this program. The **State Board of Social Workers, Marriage and Family Therapists, and Professional Counselors** recognizes the Central Pennsylvania Psychological Association, as a sponsor approved by the **American Psychological Association**, to be a pre-approved provider of Continuing Education programs for licensed social workers, clinical social workers, and professional counselors.

**Central Pennsylvania Psychological Association  
Executive Committee Minutes  
November 10, 2007**

The meeting of the Executive Committee of CPPA was held at SunBridge Health, 320 Rolling Ridge Drive, State College PA 16801.

**Executive Members Present:**

Allan Elfant, John Erickson, Jennifer Harp, Sean Lukens, Marolyn Morford.

**Executive Members Absent**

Chloe House and Vibha Lal.

**General Member Present:**

Suzanne Wills

**Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 am by President John Erickson. A quorum was present.

**Minutes:**

The minutes of the last meeting were not available and, thus were not reviewed. An agenda list was presented by Dr. Erickson.

**Treasurer's Report:**

Dr. Harp reported that the fee for Art Freeman, Ph.D. was \$4,067 (plus a hotel expense of approximately \$150). The workshop brought in \$2,645 with a loss of \$1,422. The amounts in CPPA's accounts were not discussed. The possibility of having half-day workshops on a Saturday rather than a Friday to increase attendance was discussed.

**Newsletter:**

Dr. Wills has agreed to be the new CPPA Newsletter Editor. She attended this meeting to brainstorm with the Committee regarding future newsletters' purpose and content. Dr. Wills will ask Dr. Lal, CPPA secretary, to forward subsequent Executive Committee minutes to her to be included in the newsletter.

The Committee discussed how to foster a collaborative and healthily competitive atmosphere within CPPA by encouraging members to submit short articles, practice announcements (e.g., new practices, specialty services such as group therapy), and general psychological news relevant to Central Pennsylvania practitioners. Although there have been multiple requests in past newsletters for members' contributions, the Committee will continue to campaign more aggressively for such contributions and a participatory spirit. The Committee Members will assist Dr. Wills in screening these submissions to avoid excessive self promotion.

Dr. Elfant offered to submit an article regarding the dilemmas of a small town psychological practice; he also offered to write one article per year regarding ethics. Non CPPA psychologists submitting an article will be identified as a "guest author" or similar designation, and then they will be encouraged to join as a Member. It was suggested that Dr. House, the new Membership Chair, provide an update in

each newsletter on the membership data and new member recruitment/outreach efforts. Dr. Wills reported that she plans on writing two book reviews for the next newsletter which is scheduled to be published in December 2007.

The archiving of minutes and newsletters was also discussed. Dr. Lukens will consult with Dr. House about the possibility of using an online server such as Yahoo or Google Groups to manage the listserv and archival materials.

**Meeting with Senator Jake Corman:**

Dr. Morford has arranged a meeting with Sen. Jake Corman to discuss House Bill 1000 (bill to restrict outpatient authorizations) at his Bellefonte office on Thursday, November 29, 2007 from 11:30 am to 12:00 noon. She encouraged the Executive Committee members to attend and has invited a select group of other Centre County practitioners to attend also. Dr. Erickson reported that Sen. Corman attended an Open House at The Meadows Psychiatric Center in Centre Hall and seemed to be sympathetic to mental health issues.

**Future Continuing Education Programs:**

Dr. Morford offered to conduct a 3-hour workshop in mid-April (suggested date 4/12/08) on the videogame culture and the overuse of these games. During conversation at the Art Freeman reception, Tom Borkovec, a psychologist and Distinguished Professor at Penn State University, offered to conduct a workshop for CPPA. Contact will be made with him to discuss a workshop for Fall 2008.

Dr. Erickson will contact Melba Vasquez, Ph.D., ABPP, a psychologist from Austin, Texas, who was enthusiastically endorsed by Dr. Ken Pope to conduct CPPA's fall 2009 Ethics workshop.

**Ethics:**

Dr. Erickson reported that he contacted the two local psychologists who have recently had complaints directed toward them. He notified them that CPPA was contacted by the complainant. Because CPPA has no adjudicative power, no further action has been taken.

The meeting was adjourned at 11 am. The next Executive Meeting will be on Saturday, January 5, 2008 at 9:30 am at SunBridge Mental Health, 320 Rolling Ridge Drive, State College, PA 16801.

## ABOUT CPPA

The Central Pennsylvania Psychological Association (CPPA) is a non-profit, regional association of psychologists dedicated to providing opportunities for professional fellowship and the exchange of professional ideas among psychologists in the region, for fostering community awareness of psychology, and for supporting opportunities for quality professional growth and education.

**CPPA**  
**P.O. Box 1372**  
**State College, PA 16801**

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

NEXT CONTINUING EDUCATION WORKSHOP

***The Power of Video Games: Pros and Cons***  
***3 hours of CE credits***

Saturday, April 5, 2008, 9:00 am to 12:15 pm at Celebration Hall, State College, PA

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**Newsletter Information:** *The Central Pennsylvania Psychological Association Newsletter is produced quarterly. The CPPA Newsletter invites submissions by members in the form of announcements, articles, letters, and other written material. Please submit all copy in electronic format either as an email attachment (preferred), in an email message, or on disk in Word format or plain text (do not include special formatting or fancy stationery). Include your name, title, address, and contact numbers/email. The editor reserves the right to edit submitted material for space, stylistic consistency, and grammatical correctness. The deadline for the next edition is **Friday, February 29, 2008**. Please direct submissions, comments, and suggestions to the Newsletter Editor, Suzanne Wills, at [suzannewills@verizon.net](mailto:suzannewills@verizon.net) or 3115 West College Avenue, Suite 301, State College, PA 16801.*

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