Accreditation of Fellowship Programs in Forensic Psychiatry: The Development of the Final Report on Standards

RICHARD ROSNER, MD

When it was initially proposed, at the October 1979 annual meeting of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law, that a Committee on Accreditation of Fellowship Programs in Forensic Psychiatry be created, it was not immediately clear that the project would be carried through to completion. The first two persons who were approached with the suggestion that the topic be presented at either the meeting of the Executive Committee or the Business meeting of the membership of AAPL declined to do so. In fact, the original authorization was *to explore the feasibility* of developing and implementing standards for postresidency training programs. That the initial stage of the work of the Committee has been successful is, thus, both gratifying and somewhat surprising.

Part of the problem was the fact that the members of the Committee were spread across a large geographic area, so that face-to-face communication would be restricted to the October and May formal meetings of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law. Another difficulty, at least at the start of the project, was that the Committee had no funds for a secretary, for typing or duplicating materials, and no money to pay for postage or telephone calls. Among the lesser problems was enlisting the *active* cooperation of forensic psychiatrists who were experienced educators and who had a wide range of other commitments that restricted their time.

By May 1980, a Committee of fourteen members had been created and held an organizational meeting in San Francisco. It was determined that seven sub-committees would be formed to work on the substance of the standards to be developed. Dr. James Cavanaugh, Jr. would chair the sub-committee on Law School liaison and legal education. Dr. J. Richard Ciccone would chair the sub-committee on supervised clinical experiences. Dr. Park E. Dietz would chair the sub-committee on training in research. Dr. Jonas Rappeport and Dr. Park Dietz would co-chair the sub-committee on library resources. Dr. Richard Rosner would chair the sub-committee on the process of accreditation and would function as coordinator of the activities of the Committee as a whole. Dr. Robert Sadoff and Dr. Phillip Resnick would co-chair the sub-committee on faculty for fellowship programs in forensic psychiatry. At a later date, two additional sub-committees were created. One, chaired by Dr. David Barry, was directed to training fellows to be educators. The other, co-chaired by Dr. Selwyn Smith and Dr.

Medical Director, Forensic Psychiatry Clinic for the New York, Criminal and Supreme Courts (First Judicial Department), 100 Centre Street — Room 124, New York, NY 10013, and Clinical Associate Professor, Department of Psychiatry, School of Medicine, New York University, New York, NY.

John Bradford, was to review forensic training programs in Canada and the United Kingdom.

In the subsequent months, each sub-committee produced written reports, which were mailed to all of the members of the Committee for review and commentary. By April 24, 1981, the *Preliminary Report on Standards* was presented to the officers and executive committee of AAPL. That report was a compilation of the nine sub-committee reports, as amended in accordance with the suggestions of the Committee as a whole.

To bring the work of the Committee to the attention of the widest possible audience, so as to obtain constructive suggestions from all knowledgeable persons, it was decided to present the initial ideas on standards for fellowship training programs at a series of panel presentations. Panels were scheduled at the AAPL convention in October 1981 and at the convention of the American Academy of Forensic Science's Psychiatry Section in February 1982. At that time AAFS's Psychiatry Section became a formal co-sponsor of the activities of the Committee on Accreditation of Fellowship Programs in Forensic Psychiatry.

In addition, it was determined that an effort should be made to publish the work of the Committee. It was hoped such publication would alert forensic psychiatrists at large of the need to develop standards for the training programs in our field. The first such publication appeared in Volume VIII, Number 4 in the 1980 *Bulletin of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law*, entitled "Accreditation of Fellowship Programs in Forensic Psychiatry: A Preliminary Report." A summary of the work of the Committee has been accepted for presentation in the January 1983 issue of the *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, the official publication of AAFS. The publication of the final report of the Committee, which was given formal approval as organizational policy at the May 1982 meeting of the officers and executive committee of AAPL, is designed to encourage existing training programs in forensic psychiatry to bring their content into consistency with the standards developed by the Committee, to provide a guide for those psychiatric centers that are considering establishing fellowships in forensic psychiatry, and to permit trainees in forensic psychiatry to assess the comprehensiveness of programs in which they are considering enrollment.

From the inception, one of the major goals of the Committee has been to fill a gap in definition created when the American Board of Forensic Psychiatry indicated that a person who completed one year of full-time training in forensic psychiatry would be accorded two years credit toward the five years of experience required to be permitted to take the examination of that Board. The Board had not defined what the content of a full-time training program in forensic psychiatry should include. The result was, in theory, that persons who had narrow clinical and didactic experiences during their one year full-time training program could not be distinguished from persons whose training had been comprehensive. It is hoped that the American Board of Forensic Psychiatry will adopt the standards developed

by the Committee on Accreditation of Fellowship Programs in Forensic Psychiatry, so that persons who have been trained at programs that are inconsistent with the standards will not receive two years' experience credit for one year of training. Such a position on the part of the Board would encourage the upgrading of training programs in our sub-specialty and increase the likelihood that graduates of fellowship programs in forensic psychiatry will have received comprehensive training in our field.

While the Committee has completed the first phase of its work, the development of standards for training programs, its attention is now being directed to the development and implementation of a formal accreditation process, so that programs that conform to the standards can be identified and accorded official accreditation. It is anticipated that the results of this phase of our work will be reported in a future issue of the *Bulletin of AAPL*. □