

## **Isabel Richard Student Paper Award**

Awarded to one CASLPA student member for the best paper written on a specific topic related to the professions. Papers are judged on both style and content. This year's winning topic was: "Clinical supervision from a student's perspective"

### ***Gabrielle Pharand-Rancourt, S-LP***

Gabrielle Pharand-Rancourt obtained an Honours Bachelor's Degree in occupational therapy from McGill University and received the Helen M. Gault Award from her peers in recognition of her academic results and her leadership and professionalism as a student. After working as an occupational therapist with a varied adult clientele in a rural area, Gabrielle chose to return to school to fulfill her desire to better understand people with communication difficulties. She acquired experience with various clienteles during internships with the Commission Scolaire des Hauts-Cantons, the Montreal Neurological Institute, the Montreal Children's Hospital, and the CSSS de la Haute-Yamaska. Gabrielle has been a very active volunteer, coordinating the welcoming of new students, contributing to the e-newsletter "Speaking of Language", and serving as a student representative on the Executive Committee of the Association Québécoise des Orthophonistes et Audiologistes (AQOA). Gabrielle is very pleased to have received the Isabel Richard Student Paper Award and affirms that the dedication and passion of her clinical educators were the inspiration for her essay.



### ***Student Perspective on the Richness of Clinical Training***

#### **Introduction**

In our society, which many qualify as individualistic and where time is at such a premium, hundreds of speech-language pathologists and audiologists make it a duty every year to accept students into their everyday professional lives. This text is intended to pay tribute to these amazing professionals and to share the fruit of my thinking on the essential role of clinical training in the country's speech-language pathology and audiology programs. This text addresses three dimensions of clinical training that, from my student perspective, are especially rich and significant.

#### **First dimension: the sharing of knowledge**

Clinical training provides an exceptional opportunity to learn and share knowledge. This is undoubtedly the first dimension that comes to mind in relation to the role of clinical training, and with reason, since clinical training above all involves learning and assimilating knowledge. As students, we acquire much theoretical knowledge and sometimes also some illusions during our months spent in the classroom. Clinical training finally gives us the chance to "get our feet wet," to experience real life challenges and joys, and to experiment and see how the knowledge we have learned can be put into practice. Clinical educators play a crucial role in facilitating this transition. Internships also represent an inexhaustible source of a broad spectrum of knowledge. Indeed, rubbing shoulders with experienced clinical educators can often accelerate our learning process. Clinical educators help us develop attributes such as "clinical reasoning," a crucial skill that, over time, becomes almost second nature but that must be learned in the field.

I believe that students also have the ability and duty to bring their own contributions to

the table so that truly "bi-directional knowledge sharing" can occur. Concretely, from our privileged position midway between research and the field, we have the chance to glean the latest relevant data on many continually evolving speech-language pathology and audiology issues. I believe that by sharing relevant data with our clinical educators, we have a wonderful chance to help them keep current.

### Second dimension: stimulation and growth

Internships provide stimulation and outstanding opportunities for growth. I discovered this second dimension in the field, and it validated my conviction that above and beyond their professional content, internships constitute peak human experiences. Since the following discussion addresses this human experience dimension, it will be more personal in nature. Indeed, I would like to explain how clinical training has affected me as a person and future professional.

A new internship involves taking a step into the unknown and often triggers an initial period of insecurity that, in my case, often manifests itself through the age-old question, "Will I be up to it?" Constructive feedback is also an integral part of the clinical training experience. Indeed, given that internships are intended to turn out, within a few short months, professionals possessing all the required competencies, this feedback is very important. However, it should be remembered that it is not always easy to look ourselves in the mirror and that we sometimes avoid doing so in our daily lives. Nevertheless, I believe that the "instability" borne of insecurity, the newness of the experience, and constructive feedback offers outstanding opportunities for growth. For example, I am convinced that my clinical training experience set in motion a change process that has made me a more confident person and will enable me to become a more flexible professional who is more attuned to the non-verbal messages that I project. I therefore encourage clinical educators to continue providing constructive feedback that is as precise as possible because, although such counsel is not always easy to give or receive, it has the potential to trigger an extremely positive self-assessment and change process.

It also does happen that clinical educators become "mentors," especially when situations involving more difficult emotional or ethical issues arise. Mentors play a priceless role in such cases. Indeed, mentors wisely guide our process of reflection and help us find our way through delicate situations. Finally, I would issue the following warning: be careful, because the passion that drives clinical educators is contagious! Indeed, I was equally brimming with enthusiasm after launching into each of my internships.

### Third dimension: Sustaining and sharing the vision for our professions

Clinical training serves to sustain and share a coherent vision for our professions. This third dimension integrates and transcends the two preceding ones. I would argue that maintaining clinical training is one of the most powerful means available of ensuring high standards of quality and a bright future for our professions. Indeed, clinical training fulfills a number of crucial functions especially that of helping students apply and expand their knowledge. Furthermore, it allows students to benefit from a wealth of experience through contact with speech-language pathologists and audiologists who have been practicing for a number of years, and it often sets in motion beneficial processes of reflection and growth. Clinical training is thus one of the best ways of promoting quality control and ensuring that future generations of speech-language pathologists and audiologists are skilled people who possess the key human qualities required to meet

the challenges of their professions. I am firmly convinced that the richness of clinical training is unique and could not be replaced by higher-quality equipment or the best possible exams. Finally, I also believe that internships constitute the special place where the torch that lights our professions passes from one hand to the next.

## Conclusion

This text is primarily intended to honor the invaluable assistance that we as the professionals of tomorrow receive from our clinical educators and all those who serve as our mentors. I hope I have convinced you of the essential nature of clinical training and have portrayed the various facets of its richness, as seen from our student perspective.