

# Certification Nightmare

*Most of us hold opinions on contemporary issues in work practice, in all its broad dimensions. Sounding Board is a regular feature of this publication, designed to provide a forum for expressing such views, whether mainstream or controversial.*

*The opinions expressed in this section may not necessarily represent the views of the editor, the publisher, or the editorial board, but are intended to stimulate discussion or to provoke a response. Readers who wish to comment on the ideas put forth in Sounding Board should address their comments to the editor.*

### **Bruce McFarlane, MA, OTR, CVE, CIRS, CWS**

*McFarlane & Associates Rehabilitation Services  
Ventura, California*

I just noticed that certification has expanded to new heights in the work specialty areas. In the latest *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, Keith Blankenship now offers a certification to be a functional capacity evaluator. Certification processes for a certified work capacity evaluator and as a Lido Workset evaluator are available from Dr. Matheson. It is interesting to note that these individuals are not certified in the areas in which they are certifying others, or at least they do not indicate this in their credentials. There is now a move to certify ergonomists. You can become a certified professional ergonomist by submitting credentials, work history, references, etc., to another organization. The certification process seems to be never ending.

As a registered occupational therapist, certified work evaluator, and certified insurance rehabilitation specialist, I am contemplating how many other certifications I need to be considered proficient as a rehabilitation professional. It seems if I became certified in all of these specialties, it would indicate that I am able to perform the services I have been providing for the last 10 years. Additionally, I would have the following initials after

my name: Bruce McFarlane, M.A., O.T.R., C.V.E., C.I.R.S., C.W.E., C.P.E., C.F.E., C.W.C.E., C.L.W.E.

Although the organizations offering certifications profess to perform the function of presenting to the consumer that the practitioner has a certain professional level of skills and knowledge, my experience has been, that if you can pass a written test, you are a capable practitioner. Furthermore, the organizations offering certification are private, for-profit ventures that charge one up to \$275 per day to take their course and become certified. There is no peer review of the course material or examination questions to ensure content validity. Thus, it seems that profit may be more the motive than giving anything substantial to the consumer.

The field of worker rehabilitation needs to identify the basic required knowledge levels for practice and, much like the Certified Hand Therapist (C.H.T) program, develop a peer-reviewed format for credentialing. This assumes that the practitioner's basic professional education, i.e., occupational therapy, physical therapy, psychology, etc., was in some way unable to provide the skills and knowledge necessary for rehabilitation of injured workers.

In an effort to eliminate the hypocrisy and difficulty of the certification process, I have decided to develop my own credentialing organization and service which would encompass all aspects of the vocational/work rehabilitation field. You will be designated a certified work specialist and may apply by sending me a check for \$1,000 made out to Bruce McFarlane. In return, I will send you an 8½-by-11-inch desktop published, printed certificate with your name and my signature indicating that you are now a "Certified Work Specialist." The fee will help defray my minimal costs of typing your name on the certificate and mailing it to you. The remaining monies will be spent on an annual vacation with my wife and family to the Caribbean. Thanks for your support.