Single Session Therapy is Psychotherapy

Single sessions of therapy have long been established as a legitimate and scientifically supported form of psychotherapy. However, a controversy arose in Ontario when a new regulatory college for psychotherapists (CRPO) began rejecting single session therapy hours for some grandparenting applicants attempting to become registered psychotherapists. Specifically, in and around 2016 through some of 2019, the CRPO was taking the position that the 800 DCC hours requirement for grandparenting could not be satisfied with SST.

In response to this controversy, some applicants challenged the CRPO’s position that SST is not psychotherapy by appealing CRPO’s decisions to HPARB (Health Professions Appeal and Review Board). All of the appeals to recognize SST hours as psychotherapy were unsuccessful until a recent appeal resulted in a 2019 decision from HPARB that recommended that the CRPO accept SST as psychotherapy. This decision was released on May 13, 2019 and is public record (S.H.C. v College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario, 2019 CanLII 41249, ON HPARB). The CRPO did not appeal the decision.

Karen Young was approached by the lawyer involved in this appeal, Joe Jebreen, to provide an “expert opinion” to HPARB. Through a written report and testimony at the appeal, Karen provided evidence, citing peer-reviewed literature, that supports that SST can be a legitimate and effective form of psychotherapy. This included evidence that:

- supports the presence of a therapeutic relationship in SST

- the use of psychotherapeutic approaches such as narrative, solution-focused, cognitive-behavioral, motivational interviewing and others can be used in SST to effectively assess and treat cognitive, emotional or behavioural disturbances
The details of Karen’s testimony at the appeal and the decision from the appeal can be found at:

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As well, a paper written by Karen Young and Joe Jebreen that details this controversy, the responses to the controversy and the eventual recommendation of the appeal board in 2019 to accept single session therapy hours as psychotherapy will appear in the Journal of Systemic Therapies. This paper provides and expands on the arguments that persuaded the appeal board in its decision. The authors hope that making these arguments available in a publication will assist in possible future challenges to single session therapy being recognized as psychotherapy.