

## **Introduction to the Special Issue on Artificial Intelligence in Counselor Education and Supervision**

Russell Fulmer<sup>1</sup>, Wendell J. Callahan<sup>2</sup> and Olivia Uwamahoro Williams<sup>3</sup>

In 2021, Dr. S. Kent Butler began his term as the 70<sup>th</sup> president of the American Counseling Association. Dr. Butler formed a task force on Artificial Intelligence (AI), appointing Drs. Russell Fulmer and Olivia Uwamahoro Williams as co-chairs. This task force marked the first official foray of the counseling profession to systematically examine AI and its present and future applications to the counseling profession. The task force found:

1. That counselors at all levels, from those in training to seasoned practitioners and professors, need more knowledge about AI. Many counselors are interested, intrigued, or even apprehensive about AI, and they want to know more.
2. That AI can be biased. Bias, discrimination, and the potential for AI to harm is a legitimate concern. AI needs more diversity and cultural awareness.
3. That the counseling literature base lacks AI-related research. More is needed.
4. When it comes to AI and counseling, at present, there are many more questions than answers.

The task force co-chairs approached Drs. Wendell Callahan and Erika Cameron, then editors of JTCES, about the possibility of dedicating an issue to AI. The result is the present issue.

Also, there is presently another AI task force in operation. Current ACA President Dr. Edil Torres-Rivera and the ACA governing board have charged the task force with creating position statements and recommendations to guide practicing counselors, clients, and the general public. The impending documents are scheduled for public release soon.

In this special issue, AI is analyzed from applied, empirical and postmodern theoretical viewpoints. An original paper by Donna Sheperis and Shiri Sadeh-Sharvit provides an overview of real-world application of machine learning technology in a practice management platform they have deployed in their university telehealth training clinic. Sheperis and Sadeh-Sharvit share both lessons learned as well as implications for counselor education and supervision.

In the first paper we know of to evaluate chatbot efficacy for mental health support, Russell Fulmer, Eric Beeson, Carl Sheperis, Daniel Rosell and Rebecca Edelman used a comprehensive qualitative analysis to describe counselor trainees' experience using the chatbot *Tess* while in training during the COVID pandemic. *Tess* is a rudimentary and semi-autonomous artificial intelligence that can be used to provide supportive human services.

In their paper, Sidney Shaw, Sophie Oswin, Yue Xi, Fallon Calandriello and Russell Fulmer provide practical definitions that describe artificial intelligence as well as virtual reality, augmented reality, and other technologies. This *users guide* will assist counselor educators to understand various applications in this nascent field.

Hanna Cespedes, Elizabeth Robey and Tyler Wilkinson present a history of technology in mental health. Their paper focuses particularly on virtual reality and augmented reality applications in mental health counseling.

Michael Day presents a postmodern overview of mental health in Asia using web science as a theoretical foundation and suggesting that AI may be a way to assist the many people in need of treatment.

We hope that these articles stimulate further knowledge creation in our field. The application of artificial intelligence is a growing aspect of professional counseling practice. We anticipate this growth to continue for the foreseeable future.

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<sup>1</sup> Husson University, JTCES Editor

<sup>2</sup> University of San Diego, JTCES Editor

<sup>3</sup> William & Mary, JTCES Special Issue Guest Editor