

# The California Psychologist



Winter 2024 ■ Volume 57 ■ Number One



CPA 2024 Annual Convention | Save the Date!  
Page 9

Leading the Way ... An Interview with  
APA President-Elect Dr. Debra M. Kawahara  
Page 18

Clip & Save Resources for  
Doctoral International Students  
Page 29

**Editor**

Valerie B. Jordan, PhD, editor@cpapsych.org

**Managing Editor and Designer**

Debbie Pate-Newberry, Communications by Design

**Advertising Manager**

Diana Granger

**Editorial Review Board**

Joanna Edwards, PsyD

Carol Falender, PhD

Michael Kerner, PhD

Tracy Marsh, PhD

Scott Parker, MBA, CAE

**The California Psychological Association**

1231 I Street, Ste. 204

Sacramento, CA 95814

Tel 916-286-7979 ■ Fax 916-286-7971

www.cpapsych.org

**The California Psychologist**

The California Psychologist is an official publication of the California Psychological Association, a non-profit professional association of psychologists in California. Please see submission guidelines and editorial policy on CPA's website at [www.cpapsych.org](http://www.cpapsych.org). The California Psychologist is published quarterly by Communications by Design, 4607 Fenugreek Way, Sacramento, CA 95835.

**Disclaimer**

The opinions expressed in the articles appearing in The California Psychologist are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the position of the California Psychological Association. Publication of an advertisement does not imply approval or endorsement of the advertiser, the product, or the service being advertised. Advertisers of continuing education workshops may guarantee credits toward Mandatory Continuing Education for Psychologists only if they include the official language required by accrediting bodies recognized by the California Board of Psychology. Advertisers of graduate schools of psychology that are not regionally accredited may not assure licensure eligibility in states other than California.

© 2024 CPA. All rights reserved. The contents of this publication may not be reproduced by any means, in whole or in part, without the prior written consent of CPA.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS



3 Free  
CE Credits  
This Issue**FEATURE ARTICLES**

- 10** Leading with Authenticity: Fostering Connections and Building Trust by Being Yourself   
Tonya Wood, PhD
- 14** Reimagining Psychologist Leaders   
Rachel Wing Ka Wong, MS and Jorge Wong, PhD
- 18** Leading the Way: An Interview with Dr. Debra M. Kawahara on Psychology, Leadership, and the Future of APA

**FEATURE COLUMNS**

- 29** Student Q & A: Resources for Doctoral International Students  
Melodie R. Schaefer, PsyD
- 32** Empowering Mental Health: The Leadership of Psychologists in Shaping the Clinical Use of AI and the Metaverse  
Brenda K. Wiederhold, PhD, MBA, BCB, BCN and Giuseppe Riva, PhD, MS, MA

**IN EVERY ISSUE**

- 7** **FROM THE EDITOR**  
Leadership in Psychology  
Valerie B. Jordan, PhD
- 8** **FROM THE PRESIDENT**  
Embracing Change, Fostering Connection:  
A Vision for Dynamic Psychology  
Melanie Chinchilla, PhD
- 9** **FROM THE CEO**  
Back the PAC!  
Scott Parker, MBA, CAE
- 25** **LAW FOR PSYCHOLOGISTS**  
Evaluating "Danger to Self or Others" in Individuals with a Developmental Disability   
Jack P. Lipton, PhD, Esq.
- 27** **COUNSEL'S CORNER**  
SB 525 Spotlight  
David Leatherberry, JD
- 28** **ETHICS CORNER**  
My Therapist Is a Brand: Thinking About Asynchronous Text and Video Therapy   
Catherine Cohen, PsyD
- 34** **NEW MEMBERS**
- 36** **CHAPTER AND VERSE**
- 38** **CLASSIFIEDS**

## Empowering Mental Health: The Leadership of Psychologists in Shaping the Clinical Use of AI and the Metaverse

Brenda K. Wiederhold, PhD, MBA, BCB, BCN and Giuseppe Riva, PhD, MS, MA



**Brenda K. Wiederhold, PhD, MBA, BCB, BCN**

(bwiederhold@vrphobia.com) is Co-Founder of the Virtual Reality Medical Center and Interactive Media Institute, a 501c3 non-profit. She is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist in both the U.S. and Europe and a Visiting Professor at the Catholic University in Milan. Her PhD is in Clinical Health Psychology, and she is on the Medical Staff at Scripps Memorial Hospital, La Jolla and a member of the Pain & Palliative Care Committee. She is Editor-in-Chief of *Cyberpsychology, Behavior & Social Networking Journal*.



**Giuseppe Riva, PhD, MS, MA**

(giuseppe.riva@unicatt.it) is Professor of General Psychology at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart. He serves as the Director of the Humane Technology Lab, a pioneering university initiative dedicated to exploring the human aspects of technology. Dr. Riva is also the European Editor for the *Cyberpsychology, Behavior & Social Networking Journal*.

**Y**ou are in a job interview. The interviewers are seated across from you, asking basic questions about your work history, but your mind goes blank. You feel the familiar twinges of anxiety coloring your thoughts. Your heart rate accelerates. You feel sweat on your brow. At this moment, you could either let your thoughts continue to spiral away from you – or you could practice emotional regulation skills to bring yourself back to baseline.

Emotional regulation refers to one’s ability to modulate their emotional state, and it can be positive or negative. Some behaviors include re-appraisal, distraction, problem-focused coping, and substance use (Cisler et al., 2010). However, people with anxiety disorders are less able to regulate their emotions, to the point that certain regions of the brain in patients with Generalized Anxiety Disorder fail to activate in comparison to healthy controls (Etkin et al., 2010). In the context of anxiety disorders, virtual reality and artificial intelligence present a promising form of treatment because it enables the personalized simulation of real situations and contexts that encourage participants to act naturally, without the same stakes as in-person interactions.

There are two key elements in these digital experiences: the virtual agents and the therapist. The “virtual agent” is a virtual character generated by the computer program, and the emotional expressions and nonverbal cues virtual agents provide today are far more advanced than their predecessors – particularly when these agents are combined with artificial intelligence (AI). Interactions with these agents have been included in studies in which participants were asked to identify their emotional states as part of an assessment of emotional recognition, and VR has successfully been used to assess and train social cognition and behavior (Stallmann, 2023). For example, a client with social anxiety may be more easily able to practice emotional regulation strategies in a virtual job interview setting because it is a standardized environment with a therapist to guide them through the experience.

However, as AI continues to advance, one may argue that virtual agents will eventually become advanced enough that

software will replace the role of the therapist. It's not a large leap in logic to anticipate a future in which a person will download a program to use in the Metaverse and interact with a virtual agent that reacts in response to their verbal, facial, and biometric cues. However, the therapist's role in shaping the patient's experience, monitoring outcomes, and guiding personal narratives remains indispensable. While technology enhances mental health by shaping experience, and acquiring and analyzing data, it should be seen as a tool supporting practitioners rather than supplanting them (Takac et al., 2023).

Rather than debating the hypothetical redundancy of humans caused by advanced technology, we should focus on creating a future where AI and the metaverse will enhance human abilities in mental health evaluation and therapy. Addressing pivotal issues, such as data quality, bias, and protecting confidential and sensitive information, is critical when implementing advanced technologies in mental health. Creating a secure and ethical framework can help alleviate concerns about the gradual replacement of the human element, a phenomenon observed in various industries that employ digital technologies, including healthcare (Riva & Wiederhold, 2022).

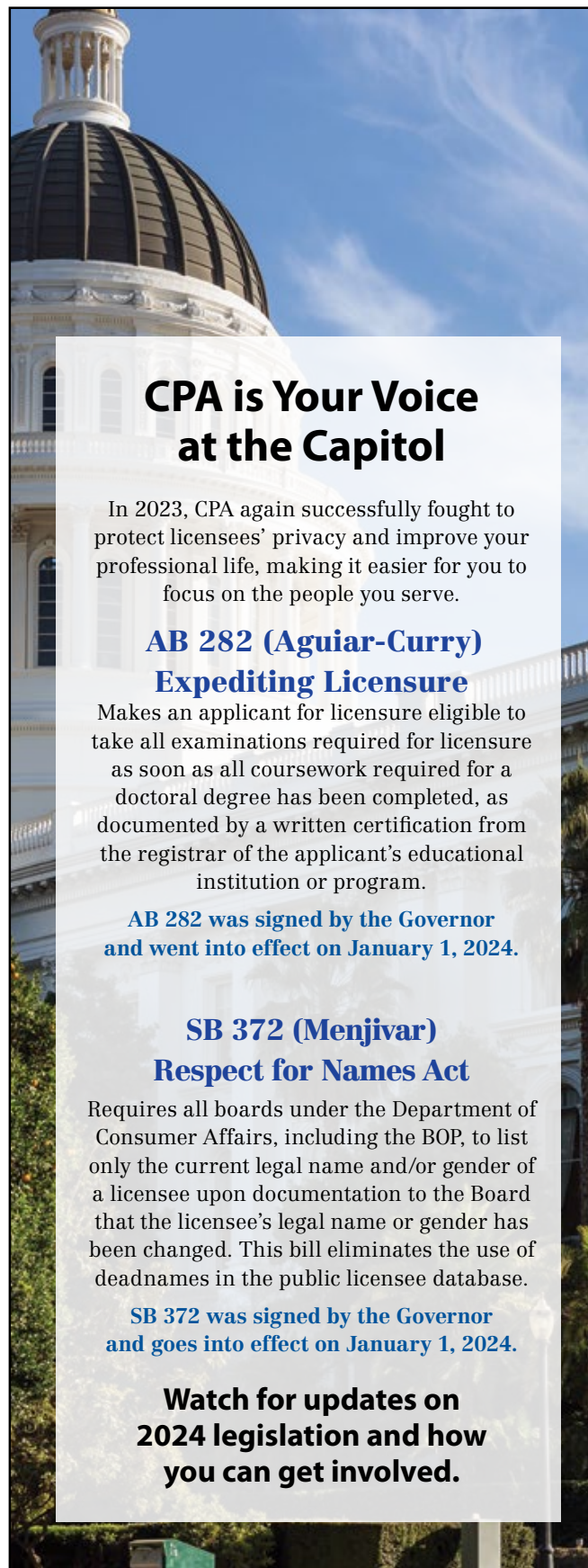
As we delve deeper, it becomes apparent that the human touch is essential in mental health services. Technology should only serve as a tool to enhance human abilities, rather than replace the refined qualities of empathy, intuition, and emotional intelligence that are inherent in human interactions. By navigating the ethical and privacy considerations surrounding artificial intelligence and the metaverse, we can utilize their potential to improve mental healthcare. This promotes a mutually beneficial relationship between technology and human expertise while protecting against any potential drawbacks. With this comprehensive approach, we guarantee that technology supports our shared effort to enhance mental health outcomes. As we proceed, the emphasis lies not on humans versus machines, but on human utilization of machines to create a mental health environment that is both efficient and compassionate. ■

---

Complete references for this article can be found at [www.cpapsych.org](http://www.cpapsych.org) – select *The California Psychologist* from the **Professional Resources** menu.

### **Division VI - Media, Technology and Communication**

Division VI educates members about, promotes, and implements information technologies to enhance their professional activities. Towards this aim, the Division provides opportunities and services for CPA members by (1) facilitating access to resources in information technology and applications to psychology; (2) disseminating information on issues relevant to the use of information technology in psychology; and (3) developing theoretical frameworks, guidelines, and standards for using information technology in media, academia, research, health and professional practice.



## **CPA is Your Voice at the Capitol**

In 2023, CPA again successfully fought to protect licensees' privacy and improve your professional life, making it easier for you to focus on the people you serve.

### **AB 282 (Aguiar-Curry) Expediting Licensure**

Makes an applicant for licensure eligible to take all examinations required for licensure as soon as all coursework required for a doctoral degree has been completed, as documented by a written certification from the registrar of the applicant's educational institution or program.

**AB 282 was signed by the Governor  
and went into effect on January 1, 2024.**

### **SB 372 (Menjivar) Respect for Names Act**

Requires all boards under the Department of Consumer Affairs, including the BOP, to list only the current legal name and/or gender of a licensee upon documentation to the Board that the licensee's legal name or gender has been changed. This bill eliminates the use of deadnames in the public licensee database.

**SB 372 was signed by the Governor  
and goes into effect on January 1, 2024.**

**Watch for updates on  
2024 legislation and how  
you can get involved.**