



## From The Director...

September 2017

*"Restoring humanity to life"*



Chuck Ruby, Ph.D.  
Executive Director

ISEPP has many benefits. But one that gets overlooked at times is that it provides the clinicians in our organization with a kind of professional protection. Those of us in ISEPP who are licensed or otherwise regulated in our work by our respective states are supposed to abide by what's called the "standard of care". Unfortunately, "standard of care" is difficult to define. There is no one place where you can find the definition. The licensing bodies do not specify what this means, but it is clearly in line with the views of the conventional medical-model mental health system.

At best, the insurance companies who cover mental

**Dear ISEPP members and friends,**

### **ISEPP's 20th Annual Conference - Mental Health: Considering Context in Human Suffering**

There is still time to [register for our 20th Annual Conference](#) this



weekend in Denver, CO. You can also register at the door. The conference theme of considering context in human suffering promises to showcase the best ideas about how emotional distress is best seen as a normal reaction to abnormal situations. Up to 18 CEUs are available.

### **Using Art to Portray the Harms of Psychiatry**



For a refreshing and powerful perspective of the harms of psychiatry, take a look at [Julia Freeman's "Drug Dealers"](#) and the [accompanying essay by Cristien Storm](#). This portrayal details the harm

dispensed by the medical and other scientific professions of authority in the name of

health services periodically publish their version, and guess what? They typically involve the prescription of psychiatric drugs or other interventions that will save the insurance companies money. The pharmaceutical companies, which heavily fund professional medical and psychiatric member organizations, also endorse this "standard of care" for obvious reasons. Professional member organizations publish ethical guidelines, but none of them get specific about the matter.

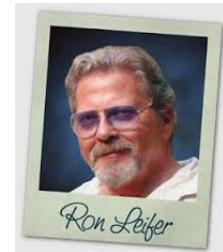
The approach of ISEPP clinicians can easily be considered contrary to this standard because we endorse a non-medical model - the exact opposite of the convention. We question the idea that "mental illness" is a matter of true disease and instead we see it as a more nuanced, personal, spiritual, and existential matter that is more difficult to work with than just popping a pill.

In the past, ISEPP members have benefited from being part of ISEPP through colleagues' support in defending members from attempts to discredit and reprimand them for violating this standard. ISEPP's support of these clinicians has been essential in rescuing them from such oppression. Sadly, though, oppression sometimes succeeds and our members have paid a stiff price. This is one reason why we must continue in gaining strength and recruiting new clinicians

advancement. Accordingly, the essay is a critique of "American's (sometimes appalling) faith in scientific and medical advancement [that] dovetails atrociously at times with arrogance, abuse and exploitation."

### **The Loss of a Champion**

Sadly we have lost one of ISEPP's giants. Ron Leifter, M.D., died at his home in Richford, NY, on July 28, 2017 after years of struggling with the effects of a stroke. From the 1950's onward, Ron fought hard to return humanity to the fields of psychiatry and psychology. He was a protege, colleague, and friend of Thomas Szasz, and he courageously defended Szasz from institutional attack at the State University of New York, Upstate Medical Center Syracuse. He was eventually fired for that rebellious move by such a young psychiatrist. Still, Ron carried on in the Szaszian tradition by presenting an alternative approach to helping people suffering from emotional distress. He developed a synthesis of western psychology and Buddhist philosophy which culminated in the publication of *The Happiness Project*, *Vinegar into Honey*, and *Engagements with the World*. We will miss him greatly.



### **A Fallen Star**



We've also lost one of ISEPP's newer members. Matt Stevenson was one of the most active psychiatric survivors we've seen. He joined ISEPP and other organizations within the critical

into our fold.

Many who have never heard of ISEPP would gladly join if offered the chance. They are out there and they question the inhumane convention, but they are hesitant to speak up for fear of professional censure. Having a group of fellow professionals who cannot be discounted as mere fringe elements, but who are licensed, credentialed, well-reasoned, and otherwise mainstream clinicians like those in ISEPP offers a great deal of benefit and helps us in our mission of restoring humanity to life!

psychiatry movement in order to understand his experiences on the receiving end of the system. He motivated others as he shared his journey of searching for meaning and establishing a new life outside the medical model. Sadly, his emotional turmoil and hopelessness grew recently during an effort to challenge a mainstream pessimistic view of recovery from psychosis. He eventually chose to end his pain. His contributions and inspiration will be sorely missed. You can read a [wonderful tribute to his life](#) published by Mad in America.

As always, please share this newsletter and other ISEPP information through your social networking sites. Also, make sure to visit our [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages. Feel free to contact our Executive Director, Chuck Ruby at [docruby@me.com](mailto:docruby@me.com) or 301-646-6022 if you have any questions or suggestions.



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