

EDITORIAL ESSAY

Editor's Message

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Dear readers,

For years in life care planning, bright and dedicated professionals sought to establish a literature base for our specialty practice. They accomplished this through discourse within the community, conducting research to validate our practices and establishing and re-evaluating standards by which we conduct life care planning practices. From the early 1980s until now, these life care planning giants like Dr. Roger Weed, Dr. Paul Deutsch, Susan Riddick-Grisham, Karen Preston, Dr. Debbie Berens, Patti McCollum (and many others) forged this pathway that had not existed before. But for their generosity and willingness to sacrifice their time for the greater good, life care planning, I surmise, would not be the prolific field that it is in 2025.

It is on this path that they paved where we find ourselves evaluating our position. With multiple journals, training programs, certifications, textbooks, and scholarly publications, there is chatter about there being “too much” available information in life care planning. Whereas most fields would look upon the abundance of educational materials as 100% positive, some in our community see this abundance as a threat. For decades, I have personally heard repeated the concern that “if you publish something, you will be asked about in deposition (or trial)”. Sadly, this has discouraged many life care planners from actively engaging in the sphere of publication.

In 2017, Dr. Theodore Scott Smith, wrote in *The Rehabilitation Professional*, a piece titled “*Where Have all the Scholars Gone?*” (a link to which can be found here https://rehabpro.org/page/rehabpro_251). Dr. Smith discussed the threats to scholarship that, at the time, existed in the field of rehabilitation counseling. Dr. Smith wrote:

A key feature to any profession is its research—a stagnant profession cannot stand and will indeed fall without continuous research. Apathy for scholarship will certainly result in the demise of a profession, and the field of rehabilitation counseling cannot suffer this death

Unfortunately, between 2017 and 2025, this trajectory has resulted in further decimation of a once-booming counseling subspecialty. None of us wants to see this occur in life care planning. Life care planning remains a relatively nascent field and we need to continue to build upon the work

of those who came before us. We WANT to be asked about the things published in our community. We WANT those who hire us to be curious about our methods, our philosophies and our approaches. We WANT a robust literature base, with cross-validated tenets that have withstood the test of time, multidisciplinary analysis and legal challenges.

The expectation that we should have a working knowledge of our profession is one that we should wear like a badge of honor. As life care planners, we are educators at our core. Be proud of the information amassed to date- and be willing to critically evaluate it. Be curious about what exists- and be willing to contribute to it. Certainly, this issue is full of individuals within life care planning who have been willing to do this and I, for one, am a better life care planner for their work.

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