Title of Presentation: Perspective Transformation in Sonographers on a Stairway to Profession

Overview of the research purpose: The purpose of this dissertation is to gain insight into the phenomenon of perspective transformation of sonographers during their journeys becoming clinical sonographer specialists.

Context of the project: A curriculum of studies was proposed some years ago (Hall et al., 2001); a few universities are gearing up to offer educational programs; and the sonography community recently convened a conference for key stakeholders to come to consensus on the pioneering new occupation of Clinical Sonographer Specialist (SDMS, July 2006). As the medical community prepares for the development of this new occupation, it is paying heed to matters of didactic content but insufficiently attending to affective matters such as the development of increased autonomy of practice (Benacerraf, 2004, Finberg, 2005).

Explanation of the problem in practice: Due to a physician shortage and the authority that the medical practice act gives physicians to assign duties to their assistants, the roles of sonographers in a few pioneering labs recently underwent dramatic change. Without formal training, experienced sonographers advanced to a newly carved out occupation of Clinical Sonographer Specialist (Benacerraf, 2004; Bude, 2006). However, the work of the Clinical Sonographer Specialist calls for more autonomy than that cultivated during training of sonographers (Hall, et al., 1999). This leads to a concern that sonographers entering this occupation may be unprepared to take on their new roles and the quality of patient care will suffer.

Explanation of the literature gap and why the gap merits addressing: The conceptual framework for this study is drawn from literature on the sociological study of occupations, which identifies autonomy as a trait of professions (Houle, 1980). The theoretical lens of perspective transformation is used to investigate increasing degrees of autonomy. Literature on adult learning shows that individuals who successfully advance into roles of increased autonomy transform in the perspectives through which they operate (Mezirow, 1978). However, research to date provides insufficient understanding of the complex and multifaceted phenomenon of perspective transformation (Taylor, 2000). Deep, probing investigation will provide insight that addresses this gap in understanding.

Overview of the potential project: This is transcendental phenomenological research informed by the methodology of Moustakas (1994). Three to four purposively selected participants will be interviewed and the transcripts probed for the essence of the phenomenon of perspective transformation. AtlasTi software will be used for data organization and analysis.

Significance of the project relating to the problem of practice and literature gap: As the literature provides insufficient understanding of the phenomenon, designers of continuing education in the professions are impaired in their ability to provide for the training necessary for individuals to take on advanced clinical roles that require perspective transformation. This research will improve the understanding of this phenomenon in a pioneering new occupation.