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## Close-Up Dr. Michael Chafetz

There are as many paths to excellence as there are psychologists, but Dr. Michael Chafetz has moved through a set of fascinating career choices, leading him to contributions worthy of the highest standards of psychology's scientist-practitioner model.

Dr. Chafetz is a forensic and clinical neuropsychologist, providing assessment and therapy, particularly for disabilities. He provides neuropsychological assessment for defense and plaintiff cases, as well as criminal cases. He has provided analysis and research of testamentary capacity for families needing help for estate planning with a person in cognitive decline, and even neuropsychological "autopsy" to discover evidence when there is a challenge to a will.

Mike has earned the ABPP in clinical neuropsychology, and is a member of the American Academy of Clinical Neuropsychology. He is a Fellow in the National Academy of Neuropsychology. He is also a member of APA, Division 40, and the National Association of Disability Examiners. He has served as Expert to Administrative Law Judges for Social Security and consults to the Louisiana State Board of Nursing, and other licensing boards.

Mike has 98 publications and presentations, and two books, *Smart for Life* (Viking Penguin, 1992) and *Nutrient Bases of Behavior* (Prentice-Hall, 1990). He is a reviewer for *Applied Neuropsychology*, and the American Board of Clinical Neuropsychology. He has previously



Dr. Mike Chafetz, (R), Grassroots out-going president, relaxing and discussing issues at Grassroots meeting. Dr. Tom Hannie looks on.

reviewed for *Physiological Psychology*, *Brain Research Bulletin*, *J. of General Psychology*, *Southern Psychologist*, *Nutrition and Behavior*, and *Southwestern Psychological Association*.

"I actually started out as a neuroscientist," he told the *Times*, "publishing in *Brain Research*." He studied recovery processes after brain damage, "using electron microscopy, fluorescence microscopy, and receptor binding, along with conventional staining and light microscopy in animal studies."

Mike earned his cum laude undergraduate from Tulane in Chemistry and Psychology (honors), and continued for his masters there in physiological psychology. "I learned basic brain science from Arnold Gerall at Tulane," he explained. He continued on to his doctoral studies in the Chemistry of Behavior program at Texas Christian University. There, Mike studied

mostly under Fred Gage, a well-known neuroscientist in the field.

During the 80s he published regularly in Brain Research Bulletin, Physiological Psychology, Journal of General Psychology, and Behavioural Brain Research. Examples include, "Biochemical specificity of septal hyperreactivity: A behavioral discrimination," and "Recovery of function from septal damage and the growth of sympathohippocampal fibers."

Then his career focus began to change. "I eventually moved into the field of nutrients and

neurotransmitters," he said, "studying under Sarah Leibowitz at Rockefeller University in New York." His works included "Biological factors in anorexia," and "Effects of clonidine on self-selection of macro- and micronutrients." He published in Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Physiology & Behavior, and Nutrition and Behavior, as examples.

During this same time, he taught courses at Tulane as a visiting professor and assistant professor at U. Southwestern Louisiana. But eventually his work had become, "too

molecular," and he explained. "I wanted patient contact."

He found that he needed to re-specialize if he was to become a "fully fledged" neuropsychologist. "That's when I started working with Lee and Janet Matthews, Susan Andrews, and Bill Black in New Orleans, and attending the N.O. Neuropsychology Society meetings."

Mike re-specialized in clinical psychology at University of South Mississippi, and completed an internship in clinical Neuropsychology at Baylor college of Medicine, and continued his training in a post-internship residency with Drs. Matthews and Andrews. His work with disability cases increased during this time. "...that is what started me thinking about effort problems in these compensation-seeking claimants."

His most recent publication follows this direction, "Symptom Validity Issues in the Psychological Consultative Examination for Social Security Disability," The Clinical Neuropsychologist, June 2010. In this article he writes about validity issues from multiple levels of abstraction, from technical to societal, and the psychologist's role in respect to validity of findings.

Among his many contributions, Mike currently serves on the Professional Advisory Board of the MS Society of Louisiana. He has served on the Regional Advisory Board of the Alzheimer's Association, and



Mike with Goldie, one of his many family pets.

on the Human Rights Committee for the Volunteers of America. He participates in the mentoring program for the American Board of Clinical Neuropsychology. He has served as president and spokesperson for Grassroots Initiative, a term that he will be completing soon.

What has he most enjoyed about his career? “When I was doing neuroscience, I especially enjoyed microscopy - electron and fluorescence. I could sit for hours exploring synapses, nerve endings, and dendrites, feeling that the secrets of the brain were unfolding in front of me. In the clinical career, I have especially enjoyed working with colleagues on difficult cases, and I also enjoy clinical research. I have also very much enjoyed working with my colleagues in Louisiana on some difficult psychology issues.”

And the least? “I have least enjoyed working with bureaucracies,” he said.

If Mike could have changed something, “I would have oriented toward getting a clinical degree first, even if I had chosen to work in neuroscience research.”

His advice to younger psychologists is that, “There is always a market for your services, no matter what kind of psychology you want to pursue. If you are ethical, and pursue your work with diligence, you will be able to make a go of it.”

He is very much a family man, with a 21 year old daughter, Hannah, and wife, Elaine. The family is a big pet household, with Squeakie the bird, Goldie, the Golden Lab pound dog, the visiting grandpuppy, and of course Frankie, the now famous three-legged pound dog.

About his future Dr. Chafetz said, “I am very much enjoying my work and clinical research, and don't foresee large changes in the near future.” But he said, “I would like to do more mentoring.”

This is good news, because anyone would be lucky to have Dr. Michael Chafetz as a mentor. Or colleague. Or just as a friend.