NAN Member At Large
2017 Candidate Statement

Rael T. Lange, Ph.D.

It is a great honor and privilege to be nominated for NAN Member-at-Large. I feel my unique background and experience has prepared me well for this position. Currently, I am the Research Director and a Senior Scientist for the Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center (DVBIC) at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC), Bethesda, MD. I am responsible for overseeing the scientific and academic direction of traumatic brain injury (TBI) research within DVBIC at WRNMMC. As part of that role, I serve as the Scientific Director/Co-Principal Investigator for a congressionally-mandated 15-year longitudinal study on outcome from TBI in service members/veterans. From 2006-2014, I was the Principal Investigator of a longitudinal TBI research program located in the Emergency Department of Vancouver General Hospital and the University of British Columbia (UBC), Canada. I have been a faculty member in the Department of Psychiatry at UBC since 2006 (Clinical Assistant Professor [2006-2014]; Adjunct Professor [2014-present]).

I completed my undergraduate and graduate training at the University of Southern Queensland in Australia. After graduating from my PhD (Neuropsychology) in 2000, I moved from my native Australia to Canada to complete my postdoctoral training in neuropsychology (clinical and research) at UBC and Riverview Hospital (2001-2003). Following my postdoctoral training, I continued to work in both a clinical and research capacity until 2006 (UBC and Riverview Hospital) when I transitioned to a full time clinical research role at the British Columbia Mental Health and Addictions Research Institute. In 2010, I relocated to Washington DC to develop a large scale TBI research program within the Department of Defense at WRNMMC. I have been an active clinical researcher for the past 17 years, particularly in the area of TBI, symptom/performance validity testing, and neuropsychological assessment methods. Based on my contributions to the field of neuropsychology, I have been recognized as a Fellow of NAN (2012) and received a number of honors including the NAN Nelson Butters Award (2015) and NAN Early Career Award (2010).

I am enthusiastic about my candidacy and the opportunity to serve NAN as a board member. As someone who has worked in the field of neuropsychology in multiple countries, in both clinical and research capacities, and in both civilian and military settings, I believe my background and experience provides me with a unique perspective that will enable me to serve the interests of the large and diverse NAN community.

Dr. Lange is a member of the following organizations:

National Academy of Neuropsychology (Fellow); International Neuropsychological Society (Member); American Academy of Clinical Neuropsychology (Member)

1.   How does your background qualify you for this office?

I have been an active member of NAN since I attended my first annual meeting more than 20 years ago. Since then, I have regularly attended and routinely presented research at NAN's annual conference. During this time, I have had the pleasure of serving NAN in a number of different capacities including Program Chair (2015), Poster Chair (2011), Program Committee member (2010-2016), Grants Committee member (2009-2011), Poster Abstract Reviewer (2007-2017), and Poster judge (2008-2011). I have also served on the editorial board of Archives of Clinical Neuropsychology (2008 to 2016). These experiences have given me great insight into the organization and the needs of our members and will serve me well if elected as Member-at-Large. In addition, my training and experience is firmly steeped in the scientist practitioner model. I have been fortunate to have worked in the field of neuropsychology in Australia, Canada, and the United States, in various clinical and research capacities, and in civilian and military settings. During this time, I have provided clinical services to patients with neurological and psychiatric disorders, supervised and mentored students at the undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral level, and have established multiple large scale research programs focusing on outcome from TBI. These experiences have provided me with a unique perspective that will allow me to represent a breadth of viewpoints to the board when considering decisions that affect the academy membership engaged in clinical work or research, and for those members who are located both within and outside the United States.

2.   What do you see as the major challenges to neuropsychology in the next 5 years? How do you believe NAN, under your leadership, can be effective in meeting these challenges?

Neuropsychology, as a profession, will continue to face many challenges at a number of levels over the next five years. In my view, two of the biggest challenges are (i) continuing to promote neuropsychology to other disciplines, consumers, and legislators, and (ii) improving the profession's ability to serve culturally diverse populations. Of course, these challenges are not new and have plagued neuropsychological practice for many years. However, these are ongoing challenges that require continual focus. NAN, through its leadership and committees, should (a) continue to promote itself as a profession by increasing our visibility to health care providers, consumers, and legislators in an effort to highlight the unique contributions of neuropsychologists, and (b) work collaboratively with other organizations to assist in developing practical, real-world tools and resources to enable neuropsychologists to be confident in their ability to serve culturally diverse individuals. If elected as Member-at-Large, I will strongly support NAN's outstanding existing advocacy and promotional efforts for neuropsychologists through the Legislative Action and Advocacy Committee (LAAC) and Professional Affairs and Information Committee (PAIC). In addition, I would strongly advocate for placing emphasis on increasing international membership. Although there are many current international NAN members (i.e., representation from 24 countries), there is much room for growth. With increased organizational growth, our ability to successfully promote neuropsychology as a unique and needed profession will improve.

3.   How would you promote professional practice?

NAN has already developed a large and impressive portfolio of methods to promote the professional practice of neuropsychology. These include formal committees that directly advocate for practitioners (e.g., PAIC and LAAC), in-person and web-based opportunities for continuing education (e.g., NAN's annual conference and online 'DistanCE E-Learning' program), publications that provide information regarding up-to-date research and clinical advances (e.g., Archives of Clinical Neuropsychology and NAN Bulletin), and the use of social media to promote the practice of neuropsychology to lay people (e.g., NAN's Social Media Committee). As NAN Member- at-large, I would strongly support all of NANs efforts to promote professional practice. However, of particular interest to me is NAN's continuing education program. For the past 10 years, I have supported NAN's annual conference in my roles as Program Chair (2015), Poster Chair (2011), Program Committee member (2010-2016), Poster Abstract Reviewer (2007-2017), and Poster judge (2008-2011). If elected, my past experiences supporting the annual conference will enable me to provide leadership and guidance for future conferences. In addition, I would provide support to the 'DistanCE E-Learning'

program by helping to continue the excellent work of those who have developed this outstanding online educational resource by supporting the development of additional courses and webinars. I consider the 'DistanCE E-Learning' program to be one of the premiere online resources for neuropsychologists to meet their educational needs. My previous experience as Program Chair for the 2015 conference in Austin, TX makes me well suited to help support such high-quality internet-based educational opportunities.

4.   How do you plan to bridge science and practice?

My past education and professional experiences include both clinical practice and research. However, research has always been my passion and I have been working in a research capacity for many years now. Nonetheless, my clinical training has enabled me to clearly understand the link between research and clinical practice – which I have found highly valuable in my own research program. To date, the vast majority of my scientific endeavors have focused primarily on clinical research. In order for clinical research to have maximum impact, scientists must design research studies and produce results that are clinically relevant, and disseminate results directly to clinicians in a meaningful manner. NAN already has a very robust education program that provides a number of venues to disseminate clinically meaningful research findings to academy members, future members, and colleagues in other disciplines (e.g., Book Series, Annual Meeting, DistanCE E-Learning). As NAN Member-at- Large, I would actively (a) encourage academy members to present clinically relevant findings using these mechanisms, (b) identify opportunities to encourage and educate academy members to use methods that produce clinically-relevant results, (c) encourage future NAN conferences to include specific sessions on ways to bridge science and practice, and (d) provide support to existing NAN initiatives that are actively focused on bridging science and clinical practice (e.g., the LAAC 'HONE-In' project) and ensure that the NAN membership is informed about these projects and services.