

## **Some Basic Guidelines for Protecting Confidentiality in Case Presentations To the Community**

The purpose of Case presentations at Colloquia and Clinical evenings is to illustrate clinically the theoretical and professional issues that are being considered. These presentations are not meant to provide supervision to the presenter, but rather educatory examples for consideration and discussion to the learners present, both analysts and candidates, so it is not necessary to provide the kind of intimate, detailed information that is appropriate to effective supervision.

The utmost care and respect for psychic material and process are needed on the part of both the presenter and the community when case material is presented. These examples can be provided with short case vignettes, or with longer case presentations, and in either case, great care must be taken to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the person whose material is being presented in a venue more public than one-on-one supervision. In addition, such cases must never be discussed outside of the setting in which they are presented.

Permission to use the material should be sought and granted, if possible, and it is advisable not to use very recent and active material that has not been thoroughly processed over time and/or through supervision. Even obtaining permission needs to be handled carefully, because the person in analysis may not feel free to say no, for a variety of reasons, or may feel pleased or flattered that the analyst wants to present them, without understanding the implications of what it might mean to be presented publically. As there might be unconscious motivations on the part of either the analyst or the analysand, care has to be taken both in how permission is sought and granted, and especially in how this material is presented. One guideline might be to imagine how the person being presented might feel if they could hear how the material was being presented and received.

Even with permission, however, it is an ethical breach to present information that would identify the person, or to knowingly present a person that is or could easily be known to any member of the community, such as someone in the same or a related profession, or someone involved in some way with the community, or persons who are well-known, famous or recognizable in any capacity. It is necessary and appropriate to fictionalize the person's name, profession, and any other identifying information, such as age, gender, family configuration, or country of origin that can be changed without distorting the nature of the material being illustrated. If a case requires revealing information that would be difficult to disguise, it is better simply to not use that case. With vignettes, it is sometimes possible to build a layered clinical picture by using two or more vignettes from different cases to illustrate one clinical or theoretical point, which do not require much or any identifying information at all. Care and respect for the therapeutic relationship, the psychic material and the privacy of the analysand are of primary importance and consideration in selecting and presenting a case for professional programs.