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**PERCEIVED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AMONG  
MENTAL HEALTH PRACTITIONERS  
IN NEW ZEALAND**

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Masters in Arts in Psychology  
at Massey University

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**2002**

*for Sarah*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are a number of people and organizations that have helped to make this project possible. I would like to thank Kevin Ronan and Paul Merrick for their teaching and supervision. They provided inexhaustible patience with extended timelines, ready sense of humor, and expert guidance throughout the duration of this project.

I would also like to acknowledge the professional organizations that kindly published invitations to participate in their newsletters, or distributed questionnaires in standard mailings to their members. These organizations were: Alcohol and Advisory Council of New Zealand, Compulsive Gambling Society, New Zealand Association of Counselors, New Zealand Association of Psychotherapists, New Zealand College of Clinical Psychologists, New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, New Zealand Psychological Society, and the Salvation Army. Special thanks are extended to Nigel Long, John Spicer, and the School of Psychology at Massey University for their continued support.

Finally, I would like to thank several colleagues, Hansruedi Ambühl (University of Bern), Helge Rønnestad (University of Oslo), Frank Deane (University of Wollongong), Malcolm Johnson (University of Auckland), and David Orlinsky (University of Chicago) who provided key resources and consultation on conducting practitioner survey research. Their collaboration and encouragement was essential for the completion of this project. Thank you and kind regards.

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## FOREWORD

Study of psychotherapy processes and outcomes has far outweighed study of its practitioners. New methodological advances in psychotherapy research have led to an increased emphasis on the role of therapist factors in ensuring successful psychotherapy outcome. Implicit in these methodological advances is the suggestion that the treatment procedures, and not the therapists delivering them, are ultimately the main determinants of successful treatment outcome.

Although researchers have incorporated therapist years of practice or extent of training when evaluating psychotherapy, this is often misleading as it fails to consider what it actually done during those training and practice years of professional development. Unfortunately, only a few studies have examined mental health professionals' professional development, and little is currently known about the process of development over the course of a practitioner's career. This thesis is an extension of the Collaborative Research Network's study of mental health professionals' professional development to New Zealand.

This thesis starts with a description of some recent advances in psychotherapy research, and how they have refocused the field's attention towards the role of the practitioner in influencing treatment outcomes. This is followed by a description of the existing theoretical and empirical work on practitioners' professional development, and an overview of existing methods of assessment. An outline of the CRN study aims and methods are then overviewed, before presenting and discussing the results of the New Zealand practitioner survey.