

# Perspective

## Going Forward

Michael Lee, MA

*Founder of Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapy, IAYT Advisory Council*

The 2007 IAYT conference in Los Angeles was a huge success. In particular, I appreciated the diversity and professionalism that was present and celebrated throughout the event. I left with two key ideas that I want to support with action going forward:

1. Research is very important, and we need to embrace it individually and as a profession.
2. Standards are also very important to the practice of Yoga therapy, and we have a unique opportunity to not only create standards for our profession but to do so in a way that acknowledges, embraces, and supports our diversity.

It is the second of these ideas that I want to elaborate on here, and I put forth the following principles to test for agreement among my colleagues:

1. Standards are important and a mark of professionalism. All Yoga therapy practitioners need to be aware of professional standards that apply to their practice and need to be supported in embracing them.
2. The profession of Yoga therapy as currently practiced is both broad and diverse, with several different schools and many different approaches. Although there may be some common elements, there is a diversity of opinion on what actually fits under the definition of Yoga therapy, and even greater diversity in terms of how it is practiced.
3. This diversity is one of the strengths of the profession, and we need to respect and safeguard it rather than try to eliminate differences for the sake of conformity to pre-determined universal standards.
4. Different standards apply to different approaches to Yoga therapy, and any overall professional response to the issue of standards should acknowledge and allow for this diversity.
5. Where standards are meaningful and applicable to what one practices, there is a greater likelihood for those standards to be embraced by practitioners.
6. Standards should be a vehicle for the elevation of the professionalism of a Yoga therapist's practice, rather than simply a means of eliciting conformity.
7. The ideal approach to standards would be for each recognized school to set standards that apply to the scope of practice of their graduates, and for the professional body (in this case, IAYT) to take a facilitative and supportive role.
8. Counting hours as an approach to standards is rapidly falling from favor in many other mainstream professions, and it should not be considered as an overall approach to setting standards. Current findings show that completion of numbers of hours does not necessarily translate into a more professional or effective practice. In fact, it may even become a barrier it.
9. Instead, the creation of performance standards for each element of one's scope of practice, along with evaluation of an individual's capacity to meet performance criteria, provides a far more reliable way of ensuring that Yoga therapists are indeed able to professionally practice what they are trained to do.
10. Different performance standards and the criteria for meeting them apply to different schools and should be unique to those schools and approaches, so long as the basic criteria of safety and responsible practice are covered.
11. The professional umbrella entity (IAYT) should also have a role in educating the consumer (the public) about the diversity within the profession and the range of options available to them.

12. Once schools have demonstrated their capacity to define their scope of practice and set and apply performance criteria and standards accordingly, they should be recognized by the professional entity as in compliance with overall professional requirements.

Direct correspondence to Michael Lee at *Michael@pyt.com*.