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(...)

03 August 2011

To the Senate Committee

I am writing to contribute to the discussion about the specialist skills of clinical psychologists as reflected in Medicare rebates and also the proposed cuts to the number of psychology treatment sessions per year for clients.

In my view, I am in a good position to comment from personal experience having first become a registered psychologist following four years of university training and two years of work-place based internship. After working for a few years as a psychologist, I found that I lacked the theoretical knowledge and specialist skills required to work with clients with more complex presentations. I then decided to complete a doctorate in clinical psychology to bridge the gap so that I could be better equipped to work with a broader spectrum of clients. Completing the doctorate involved the considerable commitment of three years of full time academic study, research and placements. The placements were targeted to my learning needs with intensive clinical supervision and evaluation. The time spent on placements and the high level of clinical teaching, provided me with skills and experience that I now use in my private practice with complex clients. The clinical psychologists who work with me provide specialist treatment to clients with eating disorders. Having previously been a generalist psychologist, I see clinical training as an essential requirement for working with this complex client group.

In reference to the proposed cuts to the number of treatment sessions, there are some clients we see with eating disorders and other complex presentations who would not be able to complete essential treatment without the current number of treatment sessions. This would leave clients with high levels of symptoms that can have a pervasive and debilitating impact on their lives. Appropriate treatment can improve the opportunity for them to re-engage in study, work and relationships.

I hope that this adds to the information provided by the Australian Psychological Society to support the current number of treatment sessions provided for clients and also supports the recognition of the unique skills of clinical psychologists in treating some clients.

Yours sincerely

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Clinical Psychologist