

Community Affairs, Committee (SEN)

July 23, 2011

I am the Director and Principal Psychologist of Psychology Melbourne Partners, a private practice which employs 19 psychologists at two clinics in Melbourne's inner suburbs.

I am a generalist psychologist myself and have spent more than 20 years in private practice.

I employ a mix of generalist and clinical psychologists and have found that there is no evidence to suggest that our clinical psychologists perform better than our generalist psychologists. In fact in some cases, it's the opposite.

A business advantage of employing clinical psychologists is that they attract a higher rebate – and hence a lower gap fee for our clients – which seems grossly unfair generalist psychologists.

I have also been a Coordinator of Professional Development programs for 15 years with the Australia Psychological Society and find that generalist psychologists are keen consumers of extra training. They tend to have a broader range of psychological skills than the more narrowly-trained clinical psychologists, who are trained exclusively to Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).

While generalists also have CBT training, they are usually more eclectic - using I.P.T. and other modalities - which for some clients can be a more effective approach.

I believe the divisions in the profession are artificial, unfair and unjustified. The vast majority of mental health problems can be handled by generalists – particularly those with more than 5 years' experience.

A 2-tier system might work if there were 'true specialists', who worked in restricted areas as happens in the medical model.

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