

3/8/11

To Whom It May Concern:

In relation to recent discussions within the field of psychological practice, I would like to submit to you some reflections in relation to the issues that are being considered as part of this enquiry.

I would like to raise concerns regarding the distinction between 'generalist' and 'specialist' psychologists and the subsequent impact this has on the Medicare rebate system.

I am the Head of Counselling Services at a private school (PK-12) with over 2000 students. As a psychologist working in a School I see a wide range of presenting issues, many of which are addressed internally. However, we also consult and work together with paediatricians, psychiatrists and private psychologists.

In the last 4 years we have recruited a number of psychologists, both generalist and clinical and based on my experience the training of a clinical psychologist does not necessarily make them more experienced or better equipped to address psychological issues. I understand that this is not always the case but much like other industries, the training of an individual only contributes part of the way to the success of the individual in their role. There are many other qualities that contribute to making someone a successful and effective psychologist, such as manner, life experience, ability to empathise, professional experience, counselling skills, supervision etc. It is disappointing that this seems to be neglected and that a hierarchy has now been established both within the profession and in the public eye, based purely on a university degree. The requirements during the various courses need to be considered when making this decision. What level of competency/results is required for some to be a clinical psychologist? I have recently started supervising an intern who is completing his 2-yr supervision registration pathway and the requirements for this path are substantial and involve a combination of theory, practice and supervision. Having worked as a psychologist for several years I can now truly appreciate the benefit one receives by learning on the job with close supervision. I don't discount the valuable training that clinical psychologists receive but I find it hard to accept that this automatically makes them worthy of greater recognition.

As a result I find it frustrating that Medicare has adopted this hierarchy with its two-tiered system. It does not acknowledge the many skilled and experienced generalist psychologists that exist and supports a public view that is not based on evidence and in fact reduces the access to psychological intervention, which is in such high demand, as many people believe that only clinical psychologists can be effective.

I hope my views will be considered as part of this enquiry and help stabilise a profession that I love and value and hope that the Government are able to review some of these misconceptions.

Sincerely,

Psychologist