

Dear Senators,

thank you for taking the time to listen to the concerns of psychologists regarding the mental health funding issue.

1. As a generalist psychologist with 12 years in private practice I am very concerned at the prospect that the number of sessions presently available to clients is to be reduced. The clients referred to me range from moderate to severely unwell. I have many complex cases who have been in the 'too hard' basket within the Public Health system. Mental health is such a huge issue that the public health system is understandably unable to provide the regular connection a great deal of clients need. The present Medicare and ATAPs schemes provide regular treatment a possibility for these people. It works well as it is now and has made a huge difference to many people.

Recommendation:

The number of sessions available through Medicare and ATAPs remains the same.

2. The issue of the two tiered system is causing a lot of dissension within the ranks of psychologists. I am coming to the conclusion that the type of work we generalist psychologists do is a well kept secret! I have never been able to understand where the differences supposedly lie between clinical psychs and generalist psychs as we all seem to provide the same support and treatment for clients and gain similar outcomes. There is a misconception that generalist psychologists see the 'worried well' - nothing could be further from the truth.

The two tiered system is giving a message that generalists are inferior to clinicals. Our clients receive less rebate for the same service. Having academic qualifications does not necessarily equal being a superior practitioner - qualifications are just the first step on the ladder. My practice colleagues and myself are committed to regular supervision, and professional development well in excess of AHPRA guidelines- the same professional development that is endorsed as continuing professional development for clinical psychs.

Recommendation:

That clients of all psychologists receive the same amount of rebate.

With thanks,

Mary Karlson MAPs

Reg. Psych.