

Senate Inquiry Addendum – The Government’s funding and administration of mental health services in Australia

I am in favour of scrapping the current two-tier system in psychology.

On 19/07/11 I made a submission to the Inquiry that briefly described and referenced some of the scientific literature that has established that post-graduate qualifications don’t correlate with psychotherapy outcomes.

I am aware that another potential claim to superiority on the part of clinical psychologists is that they are more able than generalists on the basis of more advanced decision-making skills. I don’t believe that this has been established by research but it is irrelevant in any case. This is because scientific research since the 1950s has consistently found that clinical judgement is less powerful and less reliable than mechanical predictors such as simple actuarial checklists. Such instruments are easily available and don’t require much training to use. The most widely cited paper that I could find in this field is that by Grove et al. (2000). This paper reported on a meta-analysis of 136 studies. The authors concluded –

“Even though outlier studies can be found, we identified no systemic exceptions to the general superiority (or at least material equivalence) of mechanical prediction. It holds in general medicine, in mental health, in personality, and in education and training settings. It holds for inexperienced and seasoned judges” (p. 25).

Thank you for your consideration of the above.

Ben Hansen

Reference:

Grove, W., Zald, D., Lebow, B., Snitz, B., & Nelson, C. (2000). Clinical versus mechanical prediction: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Assessment*, 12, 19-30.