

Terms of Reference

b)(iv) the impact of changes to the number of allied mental health treatment services for patients with mild or moderate mental illness under the Medicare Benefits Schedule;

A reduction in the number of sessions for patients with mild or moderate mental illness would have an impact on approx 25% of my clients. Although the overall presentation may not appear to be in the severe range, these clients generally require psychological interventions in more than one area e.g., depression, anxiety, relationship issues, stress management, sleep problems, of which usually require more than 10 sessions to address fully. A reduction in session entitlement would see these clients either forgoing further care or being financially disadvantaged to receive ongoing care.

A reduction in session number would have an even greater impact on the complex and severe cases seen in my practice for which I am uniquely trained as a Clinical Psychologist.

(c) the impact and adequacy of services provided to people with mental illness through the Access to Allied Psychological Services program;

While session number (12) for this service appears to be unchanged, in this last financial year it was apparent that services could not meet demand as ATAPS vouchers in Canberra were not available from May due to lack of funding. This placed greater demand on the Medicare system, however those clients which I had who changed system were not financially disadvantaged as I was able to Bulk bill as a Clinical Psychologist.

(e)i) the two-tiered Medicare rebate system for psychologists,

Clinical Psychology is a health service specialty in professional psychology. Clinical psychologists assess, diagnose, predict, prevent, and treat psychopathology, mental disorders and other individual or group problems to improve behaviour adjustment, adaptation, personal effectiveness and satisfaction. Clinical psychologists have extensive training in assessing a range of psychological difficulties and determining the most appropriate form of help, as well as being trained in providing more than one type of therapy. Thus a distinguishing feature of a Clinical Psychologist as opposed to a Generalist Psychologist is the breadth of problems addressed and of populations served. Clinical Psychology is the only profession, apart from Psychiatry, whose entire accredited and integrated postgraduate training is specifically in the field of lifespan and advanced evidence-based psychopathology, assessment, diagnosis, case formulation, psychotherapy, evaluation and research across the full range of severity and complexity. Clinical Psychologists are uniquely trained to treat the most complex and severe community mental health presentations. To undertake a comprehensive treatment of these individuals, more than thirty sessions per annum are sometimes required. Rather than removing the clinical tier, and removing the number of sessions available, Clinical Psychologists should be treated as Psychiatrists are under Medicare, as both independently diagnose and treat these client cohorts within the core business of their professional practices.

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