

Community Affairs, Committee (SEN)

Single tier rebate for psychological services

I would be grateful if the following be given due consideration in the discussion regarding the Medicare rebate for psychological services.

To collapse the two-tier rebate into one immediately raises the issue of the quality of the service provided:-

(i) it signifies that a broadly trained generalist psychologist is considered to be as competent as a fully trained clinical specialist who has specifically studied and practised in the all-important area of the diagnosis and treatment of *psychopathology*;

(ii) it signifies that clinical training is of no particular value as far as Medicare is concerned so allowing a registered sports or organisational psychologist to treat psychosis with neither knowledge nor the requisite skills;

(iii) most importantly, it suggests that all psychological frameworks are of equal value where the treatment of psychopathology is concerned even if a framework itself is completely devoid of the concept of pathology. In other words, the practitioner may not even think in terms of pathology but rather in terms of commonsense processes and so be unable to recognise mental illness in a presenting patient.

The proposed movement by Medicare to a single rebate system may save money and will ease discord amongst practitioners, but it speaks of a total lack of intellectual appreciation for what is at stake in patient care, namely: the recognition, knowledge and treatment of current psychopathologies.

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