

SUBMISSION TO SENATE INQUIRY INTO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Submission by: Sophie Floreani, Clinical Psychologist

29th July 2011

This submission addresses the following terms of reference:

B4 – Impact of changes to number of allied health treatment services for people with mild and moderate illness

D - Services available for people with severe mental illness and coordination of those services;

E1 – Impact of two-tiered Medicare rebate for psychological services

I am a clinical psychologist currently working in Private Practice in Parkside, South Australia. For the past fifteen years I have worked in the public mental health and forensic mental health services in New South Wales and Victoria. This experience, my post graduate training in Clinical Psychology and the subsequent ongoing clinical training required to be a clinical psychologist have provided me with the knowledge and skills to treat clients with severe and complex mental health issues. It has also provided me with expertise in providing the treatment required by the Better Access Scheme.

B4 – Impact of changes to number of allied health treatment services for people with mild and moderate illness &

Reducing the number of sessions to 10 for all clients would impact on the success of treatment of mild and moderate psychological disorders as recognised treatments such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy generally require a minimum of 12 sessions to be most effective in the reduction of symptoms. In accordance with best practice it would be appropriate to maintain the funding for 12 sessions.

(d) Services available for people with severe mental illness and coordination of those services.

Currently I see many clients with severe and complex issues such as Schizophrenia, Eating Disorders and Personality Disorders. I strongly believe that clinical psychologists are trained to deal with complex cases including those clients that access the Better Access Scheme, and that therapists require ongoing access to the 18 sessions of therapy per year for the most severe and complex client presentations if they are able to service appropriately this group of clients. This system has worked effectively through the Better Access Scheme at present and would benefit clients to remain this way rather than through other Schemes.

E1 – Impact of two-tiered Medicare rebate for psychological services

Clinical psychologists have the training and expertise in working with clients with severe and complex needs, often these clients are economically disadvantaged and can't afford to pay for treatment but cannot access the public mental health services for various reasons. I currently bulk-bill approximately 70% of my clients so they can commence and continue treatment. If the two-tiered system were to be stopped it would impact on my ability to service this client group, who need it the most.

Regards,

Sophie Floreani