

26 July 2011
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
To the Senate Standing Committee,

Re: Two tiered system

I understand that clinical psychologists are lobbying for a continuation of a higher rebate for their clients under Better Access to psychologists through the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS).

I am a psychologist, with 6 years of university training in psychology, two years of supervision and with 3 other degrees. I have completed many hours of training over the last 30 years.

It makes NO sense at all that clinical psychologists are recognised at a higher rate than other branches of psychology. There are many psychologists who have Masters and Doctoral degrees in other areas (other than just clinical) who would be highly discriminated against. There are a majority of highly trained psychologists not affiliated with a particular college who do wonderful work.

I have had clients come to see me after seeing a clinical psychologist who comment that they are very disappointed with the treatment received. I am sure that there are clients who have seen a counseling psychologist, or a sports psychologist who are less than happy. The point is – the level of satisfaction has more to do with the personal relationship than years of training.

There is NO evidence at all that psychologists who have a clinical degree are able to provide a more effective service to clients than any other psychologists. Dr Scott Miller has done research into this question over many years and found that the length of time of training is NOT a reliable indicator of effectiveness. Paradoxically, it seems that psychologists and counselors at the start of their careers with little experience often do better than psychologists with many years of training.

The Senate Community Affairs Committee has concluded that there are no grounds for the two-tiered Medicare rebate system for psychologists and recommends a single lower rate for all psychologists including clinical psychologists. This is eminently sensible, and I agree that this should be changed.

Please discontinue the two tier system for psychologists. It will save money and stop the discriminatory payment to some members of the profession.

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