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Working better.



PSYCHIATRISTS

FACT SHEET

What is a psychiatrist?

A psychiatrist is a qualified medical doctor who has obtained additional qualifications to become a specialist in the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mental illness and emotional problems. Qualifying as a psychiatrist involves obtaining a medical degree and then undertaking a minimum of 5 years postgraduate specialisation in psychiatry.

Because of their extensive medical and psychiatric training, psychiatrists are able to view illness in an integrated way by taking into consideration the related aspects of body and mind. They are trained to recognise and treat the effects of emotional disturbances on the body as a whole, as well as the effects of physical conditions on the mind.

What services do psychiatrists provide?

Psychiatrists interact and collaborate with other mental health professionals to provide a holistic level of care to those they treat. The work of psychiatrists includes the prevention, management, treatment and relief of suffering from a range of developmental, emotional, behavioural and cognitive mental disorders.

Some psychiatrists gain additional training and experience within the field of psychiatry.

Specialties include:

- Child and adolescent psychiatry
- Forensic psychiatry
- Psychiatry of old age
- Psychoanalysis and psychotherapy.

Psychiatrists also act as consultants in drug and alcohol programs and to community services.

Within hospitals they are commonly involved in liaison with other areas of medicine and surgery.

Psychiatrists and psychologists – what is the difference?

Psychologists and psychiatrists both work in the area of mental health, and often work together. However, there are significant differences between the two professions.

A psychiatrist is a fully qualified medical specialist who has completed at least 13 years of medical education in all aspects of medicine, surgery and psychiatry and specialises in the treatment of mental illness. As doctors they are able to prescribe medication to their patients.

A psychologist works with clients across the spectrum of mental health including mental illness. A psychologist has at least 6 years of university education including 2 years post-graduate education and/or training specifically in psychology.

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FACT SHEET (cont.)

Psychiatrists have a unique perspective in being able to diagnose, manage and care for people with mental illnesses and emotional problems whilst keeping both their emotional and physical states in perspective.

Where do psychiatrists work?

- General and psychiatric hospitals
- Community mental health services
- Private clinics
- Private practice
- Universities
- Public clinics

Treatments used by psychiatrists

A psychiatrist's choice of a particular treatment is based on its proven effectiveness in treating the symptom or illness. Treatment methods can be physical, psychological, involve medication, or may be a combination of these approaches. In some cases, an admission to hospital is required.

Psychotherapy is an important method of treatment in which the psychiatrist and patient discuss problems during regularly scheduled sessions to help the patient understand the basis of their problems and to find a solution. Depending on the extent of the problem, such treatment may take a few sessions over several weeks or many sessions over a longer period of time.

A wide range of medications is now available for use in psychiatric illnesses to effectively reduce and manage symptoms, alter the course of illnesses and commonly return patients to a normal life.

How do I find a psychiatrist?

GPs can find a list of psychiatrists in the Psychiatrist Referral Directory on the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) website www.racgp.org.au. GPs can also obtain referral information from their local branch of the RANZCP.

beyondblue have a national listing of health practitioners with expertise in the treatment of depression and anxiety. The Directory of Medical and Allied Health Practitioners in Mental Health can be found on the *beyondblue* website www.beyondblue.org.au

How do I make a referral to a psychiatrist?

A letter of referral by a general practitioner is normally required to visit a psychiatrist and is necessary to claim the Better Access Medicare rebate for the consultation.

For more information

Visit the website of The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists at www.ranzcp.org.