

Evaluation of the Better Access to Psychiatrists, Psychologists and GPs through the Medicare Benefits Schedule Initiative

Department of Health and Ageing

Background

Project outline

The Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) has engaged KPMG to conduct the stakeholder consultation component of the evaluation of the Better Access to Psychiatrists, Psychologists and GPs through the Medicare Benefits Schedule Initiative (Better Access) initiative.

The Better Access initiative is one of a number of programs implemented under the Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) National Action Plan on Mental Health 2006-2011 (National Action Plan). The National Action Plan is in response to strong evidence for necessary change in the way governments respond to mental illness. Government leaders recognise mental illness as a significant problem in the Australian community, with annual costs associated with lost productivity and participation in the workforce estimated at \$20 million. Improving mental health can therefore lead to social and economic benefits to the Australian community.

The Better Access initiative focuses on improving access by integrating and improving the mental health care system across Australia. A total of \$1,197 million in funding is allocated to integrating and improving the care system, and the Better Access initiative represents the most significant component, accounting for \$753.8 million.

Evaluation

An Evaluation Framework has been developed to assess the Better Access initiative's effectiveness to improve primary health care for people with high prevalence mental disorders. DoHA has adopted a modular approach to the Evaluation, with each component contributing to a summative evaluation.

Consultation with stakeholders in the mental health community will be a substantive part of the Evaluation. Stakeholder consultation will inform Component C (Analysis of the Allied Mental Health Workforce Supply and Distribution) and Component D (Stakeholder Consultation) of the full Evaluation. Consultations for Component C will be conducted in early to mid-2009. Consultations for Component D will take place starting in late January 2009.

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KPMG has responsibility for Component D: Stakeholder Consultation. A KPMG project team member will be contact with you shortly to organise a consultation. The stakeholder consultation component of the evaluation will seek to answer questions identified in the following table.

Summative evaluation impact domain	Summative evaluation question relevant to stakeholder consultation component
Service accessibility	<p>To what extent has the Better Access Initiative provided access to mental health services for people with mental health disorders? Across all Australia? Across all age groups?</p> <p>To what extent has the Better Access Initiative provided access to affordable care?</p> <p>To what extent has the Better Access Initiative provided equitable access to populations in need? (in particular people living in rural and remote areas, children and young people, older persons, Indigenous Australians, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds)</p>
Service appropriateness	<p>To what extent has the Better Access Initiative provided evidence-based mental health care to people with mental health disorders?</p> <p>To what extent has the Better Access Initiative provided services that match client needs and expectations?</p>
Service effectiveness	<p>To what extent has the Better Access Initiative improved health outcomes for people with a mental health disorder?</p>
Mental health care system	<p>To what extent has the Better Access Initiative impacted on the supply and distribution of the psychologist, social worker and occupational therapist workforce?</p> <p>How has the Better Access Initiative interacted with other related programs / initiatives, including the Better Outcomes in Mental Health Program and the More Allied health Services Program?</p>
Skilled, knowledgeable, integrated workforce	<p>To what extent has the Better Access Initiative provided interdisciplinary primary mental health care for people with mental disorders?</p> <p>Are professionals aware of how to access appropriate primary mental health care training?</p> <p>Are professionals accessing appropriate education and training?</p>
Additional focus areas	<p>What are the characteristics, including clinical characteristics, of consumers receiving Medicare rebateable Better Access mental health services?</p> <p>Are professionals, consumers and carers aware of the Better Access Initiative?</p> <p>Has the initiative impacted on the use of medications prescribed for the treatment of mental disorders, in particular anti-depressants?</p> <p>Has the introduction of the initiative changed how and where professionals practice? (e.g. movement to another location, change from public to private sector, or change in the mix of public and private sector work)</p> <p>Are there any unintended consequences for stakeholders due to the introduction of the Better Access Initiative?</p>

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The following table represents key stakeholders that KPMG intends to consult with. A variety of consultation methods will be utilised by the project team, including face-to-face interviews, focus groups and teleconferences, in addition to paper and web-based surveys.

Stakeholder group	Details
Service providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Psychiatrists Paediatricians Psychologists Occupational therapists Social workers NGO service providers
Professional bodies - National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Australian Medical Association Psychiatrists Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists General Practitioners Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, Australian General Practice Network, Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine, General Practice Mental Health Standards Collaboration, The Australian College of Psychological Medicine Paediatricians Royal Australasian College of Physicians Psychologists Australian College of Clinical Psychologists, Australian Psychological Society Occupational Therapists OT Australia Social Workers Australian Association of Social Workers Counsellors Australian Counselling Association, Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia
Professional bodies – State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Branches of national bodies Registration boards OT boards in Queensland, WA, SA and NT Rural health networks
Public health service organisations	Range of representatives from each state / territory health department
Consumers and carers	Peak consumer and carer representative bodies at the national level
Private inpatient services	Major private inpatient units



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Project contacts

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