

Every week I turn people away from the counselling/psychotherapy practice I run. Most of this is because I cannot offer the Medicare rebate, which makes my services unaffordable for many.

Despite being a rigorously trained psychotherapist with over 12 years, who is required by my professional body to complete CPD yearly and attend ongoing supervision, Medicare does not recognise my profession.

The short term, restricted access offered by the Mental Health Care Plan is no doubt cost effective, but it is not adequate for a lot of clients requiring more in-depth work. Medicare mainly recognises Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, however most clients don't even though what they have signed up to or if it is even appropriate to their needs.

Clients deserve to know they have choices when it comes to their emotional wellbeing. Research shows that it is the quality of the relationship between the client and therapist that predicts a positive outcome.

Also, as psychotherapy is a more client-centred approach, this creates buy-in and collaboration with both parties invested, thus better rates of attendance.

Accessing mental health services in Australia is a confusing, convoluted process. Surely when someone reaches out for help, they should be able to be seen quickly while their motivation is high?

As the GP is the first port of call for many when they have difficulties with their mental health, people need to be informed at that stage of what their options are – support groups, counselling/psychotherapy, psychologist or psychiatrist.

Then they can make their own choice.