

WHAT IS THE PLACE OF GENERALISM IN MENTAL HEALTH CARE IN AUSTRALIA?: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

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POLICY CONTEXT

Mental health disorders are the leading cause of the disability burden in Australia. Only 40% of people with a mental disorder report receiving treatment. General practitioners (GPs) and generalist providers are essential service providers for this population. This review examines the role of generalists in Australian mental health care, the elements of care they can provide effectively, the supports they need, and the implications for workforce arrangements and policy.

KEY FINDINGS

- In Australia generalists provide the following elements of care: recognition and case finding, assessment and care planning, patient education, pharmacotherapy, psychological therapies, other therapies, on-going management, physical care, and referral. GPs provide all elements of care but practice nurses and allied health staff provide a narrower range of elements influenced by the design of funding programs
- International evidence suggests there is scope to increase the range of elements of care provided by non-GP generalists, if appropriate support is provided
- A stepped-care approach, in which less intensive and expensive providers are used in the first instance, may be effective
- GPs could provide elements of care where they are more effective, but should be encouraged to share or delegate care which can be provided successfully by other generalists such as nurses, social workers and psychologists
- GPs are more effective in achieving health and service outcomes when they work closely with other generalists or with mental health specialists. This "teamwork" could be supported through team care arrangements

For more details, go to the [three page report](#).

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