

The Hon Peter Dutton MP
Minister for Health
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

April 3rd, 2014

I have been contacted by some Australian colleagues who have solicited my opinion about the proposed limitation of cognitive therapy to 10 sessions in the health services. While I am cognizant of the rising cost and the need for cost effectiveness, I wonder whether this is optimum in term of the best interest of the patient and the long term cost for mental health treatment. I have been in charge of a moderately large clinic for many years and cost containment has been one of the issues. Our experience has been that optimum treatment for depression probably required up to 24 visits and possibly more. The treatment for the other disorders vary in terms of the nature of the disorder, the severity, and patient variables such as age and speed of reactivity to psychotherapeutic interventions. A substantial amount of research I believe has supported this observation. Special disorders such as Borderline Personality Disorder requires between 1-3 years for successful treatment (research backs up this observation also). Successful treatment for patients with schizophrenia may last up to 18 months. In any event, we have found that the therapy needs to be individualized for the specific patient. Some patients with depression, for example, seem to get better after 3 or 4 visits and tend to drop out at that point where others require substantially more sessions than the average.

I hope that information may be of help to you.

Respectfully,



Aaron T. Beck, M.D.