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Subject: Better Access to psychological treatment
Date: Thu, 23 Aug 2012 14:51:31 +0800
From: Ben Mullings <ben@psyber.net.au>
To: Mark.Butler.MP@aph.gov.au, ministerbutler@health.gov.au

Hello there,

I would like to request a telephone meeting with the Federal Minister for Mental Health, Hon. Mark Butler MP, about the cuts to the Better Access to Mental Health Care initiative.

I am a mental health practitioner spokesperson for the Alliance for Better Access, a collective name for all Australians who are opposed to the planned cuts to psychological treatment in the Better Access to Mental Health Care initiative. In January 2013, Medicare-supported psychological treatment will be cut to a maximum of ten appointments, with no exceptions. These cuts fall well below minimum recommended treatment for moderate conditions. There is a lot of data now showing that the program has been highly effective in helping people recover and reducing their dependence on medications for anxiety and depression, even for those 80% of people who are referred to this program with severe and complex mental health conditions. We also know that the Better Access program has markedly improved the treatment rate of people with depression and that the highest rate of growth in the uptake of psychological care was amongst the most disadvantaged people in our society.

The Alliance for Better Access has announced a National Day of Action on Monday 17 September, to clearly express to our representatives on all sides of politics, that this program should not be cut. Instead, we are asking for evidence-based mental health care in the Medicare system, namely, 15 to 20 appointments per year for those who need it to recover.

Yesterday we released a document listing the responses that over 2000 people left on our petition - one in every three people who signed it, wrote extensive comments. This document shows the level of public interest around this issue and the need for better understanding from our politicians about the real impact of cutting treatment.

I have attached our press release issued yesterday and I encourage you to explore the links in this email.

I would like to discuss this further with you in person at the earliest opportunity.

Kind Regards,

Dr Ben Mullings