

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health and Aged Care

Senate Community Affairs References Committee

Inquiry into the Assessment and support services for people with ADHD

29 June 2023

PDR Number: IQ23-000054

Undergraduate level training specific to understand ADHD

Spoken

Hansard page number: 50

Senator: Jordon Steele-John

Question:

Senator STEELE-JOHN: Thank you. I hear that. My concern would be, though, the diploma for psychiatry is all well and good and a good thing, but I'm assuming that that's an optional diploma that a psychiatrist could choose to pursue. Is that correct? It's not mandatory in any—

Ms Rishniw: It's an optional diploma in psychiatry for a general practitioner to pursue. Firstly, it counts toward professional development, but it actually also goes to GPs and looking at primary care settings that increase access for people seeking support while also making sure it's done in a primary care setting, where a GP is trained in better understanding and diagnosis. So, yes, it is voluntary, but it counts toward professional development. We would expect GPs that have an interest in mental health would pursue it.

Senator STEELE-JOHN: But if we go back to the undergraduate level, for a GP or for a psychiatrist or for a nurse practitioner, is the department aware of any undergraduate-level information specific to ADHD that these individuals are provided with, so that at the beginning of their journey they have an understanding of what ADHD actually is?

Ms Rishniw: I might need to take the detail of that on notice. Certainly, in terms of psychiatry and psychology, there is that training provided, and that goes to undergraduate curriculum.

Senator STEELE-JOHN: Specific to ADHD?

Ms Rishniw: Yes, I think so. Dr Vine can correct me if I'm wrong, but Dr Vine is nodding. Specific to ADHD—Ruth, did you want to jump in here?

Dr Vine: I don't think we can say the specifics of every undergraduate nursing medical degree, but I would just say that every undergraduate nursing medical degree will include some rotations to do with child health, which includes child mental health. Certainly, psychiatry training includes a mandatory rotation in child and adolescent—

Senator STEELE-JOHN: Sorry, Dr Vine, but ADHD isn't just a child's condition. That's very much what we've heard.

Dr Vine: Sorry; no. I know. I was just starting there, really. In the majority, at least initially, the expectation is that behaviours will be present before the child is aged 12. I understand the inattentive variety is less likely to be picked up than the more hyperactive variety until later, but nonetheless there is an explicit inclusion of ADHD in those rotations. I think it is also fair to say that we are in an age—I'm sure you've seen this, with the increase in the number of prescriptions for this condition over recent years—when there is increasing awareness within professions and increasing availability of things like podcasts and webinars. The Mental Health Professionals Network provides education in that way; the college provides podcasts and webinars specific to this. They're complemented by, of course, things like guidelines. One of the things I think Anthea Raven didn't mention was that availability of secondary consultation and advice to practitioners in relation to particular areas. Again, our expectation is that some of those practitioners will have expertise in this area. So I'm not saying it is ubiquitous, but I think it is absolutely on the up.

Senator STEELE-JOHN: I'm very much aware of podcasts and webinars. They are useful resources, and they are in some ways a response to and a source of increased understanding around ADHD. That's what the evidence has shown us. But they're also not a substitute for a clear understanding of what ADHD is, provided consistently at that undergraduate level for medical professionals. I don't want to labour the point too much. What I hear from you is you're going to take it on notice. If you could provide us with any information the department has to get a line of sight as to what is made available to people, that would be great.

Answer:

- The Australian Government is not directly responsible for the delivery or design of higher education courses.
- Updates to curricula across higher education are implemented at the discretion of Australian universities as autonomous, self-accrediting institutions.
- Universities work with accreditation bodies such as the Australian Psychology Accreditation Council and Australian Medical Council to ensure courses will produce work- ready graduates.
- The Department of Health and Aged Care's (the department) Submission to the Senate Inquiry into barriers to consistent, timely and best practice assessment of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and support services for people with ADHD outlines investments the Government has made to assist in upskilling the broader health workforce on mental health. The department's submission can be found at: www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Community_Affairs/ADHD/Submissions.
- This includes a review of current undergraduate curricula for nurses, midwives and allied health students to ensure they receive contemporary training in mental health across Australia.