



FEDERATION OF TEXAS PSYCHIATRY

A United Voice for Texas Psychiatry

Key Differences Between Psychiatrists and Psychologists

Differences That Matter

Psychologists are not medical doctors and under S.B. 268/H.B. 1092 (allowing psychologists to prescribe medications) would not be required to get the training necessary to safely prescribe powerful medications.

- Psychiatrists are medical doctors (MDs) with up to 12 years of medical training in biology, anatomy, microbiology, pharmacology, chemistry and the other biomedical coursework. Also included are clinical rotations and training, medical internship and four years of residency learning to diagnose mental and physical disease and prescribe medications.
- Psychologists have an academic degree (Psy.D. or Ph.D.) in the study of psychology and human behavior. They do not have the underpinnings of any medical coursework. They may do an internship that is generally performed at counseling centers or schools.
- Psychiatrists are trained to review medical records, examine patients, order and analyze appropriate lab reports and determine if an illness is actually the manifestation of an underlying medical-mental illness.
- Psychologists are trained to test for deficits in psychological functions and human behavior. They focus on behavioral change through talk therapy, not underlying biological issues.

Requirements for the Practice of Medicine are Increasing

- A crash course in prescribing cannot substitute for the comprehensive knowledge and skills physicians achieve through medical education and rigorous clinical experience.
- Non-physician professionals who do prescribe (e.g., nurse practitioners, physician assistants) have significantly more medical training than what the psychologists propose for themselves. These non-physician providers also generally require significant supervision.
- Lowering standards to prescribe is a dangerous and costly venture. These proposals often place licensure regulation of proposed “medical psychologists” or “prescribing psychologists” under state psychology boards that lack the necessary medical expertise to oversee and ensure safe practice and standards of care.

Protect Patient Safety - Reject S.B. 268 / H.B. 1092!!