



FEDERATION OF TEXAS PSYCHIATRY

A United Voice for Texas Psychiatry

Unsafe Prescribing: An Overview

For three decades, public policymakers across the United States have debated whether to let psychologists prescribe drugs after a crash course in medicine.

*Many states have considered bills that would authorize unsafe prescribing by psychologists; five states have passed laws that allow unsafe prescribing. **Currently, the Texas Legislature has two bills filed permitting prescribing by psychologists: S.B. 268 (Sen. Rodriguez) and H.B. 1092 (Rep. Zedler)***

These bills would put patients at risk, allowing people with inadequate medical training to dispense powerful psychotropic medications.

FACT: S.B.268/H.B. 1092 put patients at risk by allowing undertrained practitioners to practice medicine. Most bills would require psychologists to complete just 10 weeks of online training before they begin writing prescriptions for potentially dangerous drugs. All oversight and certification of these programs would lie with the American Psychological Association – a clear conflict of interest.

FACT: In the states that allow unsafe prescribing, records show that psychologists are prescribing their patients heart medications, muscle relaxants and cholesterol drugs . These drugs have potentially dangerous side effects and interactions, and should only be offered by someone with extensive medical training to evaluate the risks.

FACT: Training psychologists to prescribe doesn't work. A pilot program run by the Department of Defense in the 1990s was shut down after six years, having graduated just 10 psychologists. An analysis of the program by the Government Accountability Office noted that the "substantial costs and questionable benefits" could not justify further funding of this experiment.

FACT: Some people, especially in rural areas, have a hard time finding mental health care. Allowing unsafe prescribing is not the solution. APA supports programs that help people get the care they need, such as encouraging telemedicine, promoting the integration of mental health treatment into primary care settings, as well as ensuring an adequate network of all mental health providers, including psychiatrists.

RECOMMENDATION -

We urge you to reject these proposals in favor of real reforms that improve access to safe, effective and integrated treatment of individuals who suffer from mental illness and other co-occurring conditions.