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Prescription privileges for clinical psychologists: An analysis of opinions about mental health care based on the health belief model

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Prescription privileges for psychologists have been a much debated topic in recent decades. Successful programmes and practices of prescribing psychologists have been documented, where the benefits extended to clients and the facilitation of the provision of holistic healthcare have been evident. Yet the incorporation of medical practice for non-medical specialties is still viewed by many psychologists with a mix of caution and apprehension. This thesis aims to investigate the 'prescription agreeability' views amongst various groups of stakeholders (i.e. psychologists, psychology undergraduate students and the general public) in two countries: Singapore and Australia. This study also takes a novel approach to understanding these views on prescription privileges by using the Health Belief Model to identify predictors for individuals' agreeability with the idea of extending prescription privileges to clinical psychologists as an extension of their clinical practice. Opinions regarding extension of prescription privileges to clinical psychologists were found to be overall significantly more positive than neutral. Three out of the six constructs from the health belief model, namely 'perceived benefits', 'perceived barriers' and 'health motivations' were found to predict individuals' agreeability to extending prescription privileges to clinical psychologist. This prescription agreeability did not differ by groups, country of work or residence. Advantages of extending prescription privileges as a form of healthcare monitoring for clients while concerns such as supervision and training for clinical psychologists were commonly raised by participants. Future directions for the use of the health belief model in understanding the basis of opinions such as prescription agreeability were considered. Key considerations and the potential benefits and issues related to integrating prescribing medication into psychology practice in Singapore will also be discussed.

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