



For Information Contact:

Eve Herold, 703-907-8640

press@psych.org

Alissa Schulman, 703-907-8640

aschulman@psych.org

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APA Highlights Importance of Psychotherapy in Treatment Plans

Arlington, VA – Psychotherapy remains a major component in the treatment of mental illness, the American Psychiatric Association stated today. Many mental health problems can be resolved with psychotherapy alone, and psychotherapy is often a crucial component in the success of treatment with medication.

A recently released study in the *Archives of General Psychiatry* entitled “National Trends in Psychotherapy by Office-Based Psychiatrists” showed a decline in psychotherapy practiced by psychiatrists due to insurance policies that favor shorter office visits. The study also found there is growing evidence that various therapies provide effective treatment for a range of disorders.

“The best result for many patients is often a combination of psychotherapy and medication,” said APA President Nada Stotland, M.D., M.P.H. “It is most unfortunate that so many health insurance plans will only pay psychiatrists to prescribe medication; this deprives patients of the integrated care that psychiatrists are trained to provide and decreases patients' chances of achieving the full recovery they deserve.”

Organized psychiatry is already aware of and responding to the shifts in the practice of psychotherapy. The APA established the Commission [now Committee] on Psychotherapy by Psychiatrists in 1996 out of recognition that therapy was dwindling as part of the skill set and training of psychiatrists. Psychotherapy is a required element in psychiatric specialty training, and the accreditation council established that psychiatry residency curricula must include training to a level of competence in three schools of therapy.

Eric Plakun, M.D., chair of the APA Committee on Psychotherapy by Psychiatrists, noted that talk therapy can be done by psychiatrists less expensively than split treatment, where a patient sees a doctor for medication and a counselor for talk therapy.

“Therapy provided by medically trained psychiatrists offers the maximum integration of mind and body to our patients,” said Dr. Plakun.

About the American Psychiatric Association: The American Psychiatric Association is the nation’s leading medical specialty society whose more than 38,000 physician members specialize in diagnosis, treatment, prevention and research of mental illnesses including substance use disorders. Visit the APA at www.psych.org and www.HealthyMinds.org.

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