

APA Official Actions

Position Statement on the Role of Psychiatrists in Reducing Physical Health Disparities in Patients with Mental Illness

Approved by the Board of Trustees, December 2023

Approved by the Assembly, November 2023

“Policy documents are approved by the APA Assembly and Board of Trustees. . . These are . . . position statements that define APA official policy on specific subjects. . .” – *APA Operations Manual*

Issue:

Patients with mental illness, including those with serious mental illnesses and substance use disorders, experience disproportionately high rates of medical disorders. Morbidity and premature mortality in those with mental illness and substance use disorders are significantly higher than the general population, contributing to a widening gap in life expectancy.

Psychiatrists have medical training as physicians that distinguish them from other mental health professionals. As such, they play a particularly important role on the behavioral health treatment team regarding improving the health status of their patients. For patients in specialty psychiatric services, psychiatrists are often the only physicians they routinely see.

APA Position:

It is the position of the American Psychiatric Association (APA) that:

1. **Psychiatrists play an important role in monitoring for common medical conditions associated with the use of psychotropic medications, counseling patients to reduce preventable cardiovascular risk factors, and reviewing the medical care being delivered by others.**
2. **Psychiatrists who identify patients receiving no or lacking sufficient primary care services can provide care for common medical conditions when appropriate based on competencies, local resources, and patient preferences for care.**

Author: Committee on Integrated Care

Collaborators: Council on Health Care Systems and Financing