

Psychiatrists less likely to accept health insurance, study finds

December 11 2013



This could decrease access to mental health care for those who need it.

(HealthDay)—Psychiatrists are less likely than other doctors to accept insurance, which reduces the number of patients who have access to mental health care, a new study suggests.

Researchers analyzed 2009-'10 data from a survey of office-based physicians across the United States to determine how many accepted Medicare, Medicaid or [private insurance](#) with no set dollar amount.

The results showed that psychiatrists were less likely than other doctors to accept insurance: 55 percent vs. 89 percent for those with private insurance; 55 percent vs. 86 percent for Medicare; and 43 percent vs. 73 percent for Medicaid.

The study was published online Dec. 11 in the journal *JAMA Psychiatry*.

The researchers said there have been recent calls to improve Americans' access to [mental health care](#). "[However], these findings suggest that policies to improve access to timely psychiatric care may be limited because many psychiatrists do not accept insurance," said Dr. Tara Bishop, of Weill Cornell Medical College in New York City, and colleagues.

"If, in fact, future work shows that psychiatrists do not take insurance because of low reimbursement, unbalanced supply and demand, and/or administrative hurdles, policy makers, payers and the medical community should explore ways to overcome these obstacles," the researchers said.

More information: The U.S. National Library of Medicine has more about [mental health](#).

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Citation: Psychiatrists less likely to accept health insurance, study finds (2013, December 11) retrieved 28 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-12-psychiatrists-health.html>

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