

Protect physician-led care

Psychologists are well-trained behavioral experts, but they lack the comprehensive medical knowledge and clinical experience necessary to safely prescribe psychotropic medications—some of the most powerful medications in modern medicine—to patients. Safe prescribing depends on the education and years of clinical training completed by physicians.

PHYSICIANS ARE TRAINED TO LEAD

Psychiatrists (MD, DO)

4 years

1,352 hours on average

4–6 years

12,000–16,000 hours



Postgraduate education

Science coursework required



Residency



Clinical training

Psychologists (PsyD)

4 years

0 hours

1-year internship (additional postgraduate hours may be required for state licensure)

1,920 hours

PHYSICIANS RECEIVE A COMPREHENSIVE MEDICAL EDUCATION, PREPARING THEM TO PRESCRIBE MEDICATION

Education requires coursework in ...	Psychiatrists	Psychologists
Biology	✓	✗
Anatomy	✓	✗
Pathophysiology	✓	✗
Clinical medicine	✓	✗
Pharmacology	✓	✗

WHILE A PSYCHOLOGIST IS A WELL-TRAINED BEHAVIORAL EXPERT, A PSYCHOLOGIST IS NOT TRAINED TO PROVIDE PRIMARY CARE OR TO PRACTICE MEDICINE.

MYTH

Post-graduate instruction in psychopharmacology adequately prepares a psychologist to safely prescribe and manage medications.

Psychotropic medications predominately affect one body system—the nervous system—making them safe medications to be prescribed by a psychologist with non-medical training.

Allowing psychologists to prescribe will increase access to care.

FACT

A crash course in prescribing is insufficient.

There is no standardized training for prescribing psychologists. The model curriculum developed by the American Psychological Association is taught in as little as 400 hours. **This is less than half the time a medical student spends in training in just one year of medical school.**

The coursework and clinical experience gained during a crash course in prescribing does not prepare a psychologist to prescribe and manage medications.

Psychotropic medications affect the entire body.

Comprehensive medical knowledge of all body systems is necessary to safely prescribe medications.

Access to care has not substantially improved in states that allow psychologists to prescribe psychotropic medications.

In fact, the small number of psychologists who prescribe largely practice in the same areas as psychiatrists.

Eighteen of the 30 most prescribed psychotropic medications carry “black box warnings”—the FDA’s most serious warning of potential side effects, including stroke, coma and risk of death. Only physicians have the comprehensive medical education and clinical expertise to safely prescribe medications.