

Difference between Social Work and Psychology in a Hospital Setting



What is the difference between Social Work and Psychology in a Hospital Setting?

The major differences between Psychologists and Social Workers:

1. Education and Training:

Social Work: Social workers undergo a 4 year degree (Bachelor of Social Work or Bachelor of Social Science); and with extra study the final year can be the Honours year. The third and fourth years of the degree are theory and practice-based learning with 2 field placements. Master's and doctorate degree courses are also available after additional study. **Psychologists:** Psychologists complete a 4 Year undergraduate degree (Bachelor of Arts or Science majoring in Psychology; or Bachelor of Psychology with the final year being an Honours year). To become registered, Psychologists complete a further 2 year program of supervised practice by a registered Psychologist. In addition to the 4-year undergraduate degree, Clinical Psychologists complete an additional 2-year postgraduate Masters degree or 3-year Doctorate degree.

2. Registration:

Psychologists: Psychologists are registered with the Psychology Board of Australia.

Social Work: Social Workers are accredited by the Australian Association of Social Work

3. Work Prioritise/Area of Expertise

Psychologists:

- Psychologists facilitate change in attitudes and behaviour related to health and illness, for the purpose of preventing and relieving distress or dysfunction and to promote subjective well-being and personal development.
- Psychologists are trained in the scientist-practitioner model.
- Psychologists are taught evidence based approaches to treatment.
- Psychologists are experts in Cognitive Behaviour Therapy in addition to other models of therapy including Acceptance & Commitment Therapy, Dialectical Behaviour Therapy, etc.
- Psychologists are usually referred patients or clients for targeted interventions aimed at treating mental health disorders, such as anxiety disorders, depressive disorders, psychotic disorders, behavioral problems, eating disorders, etc.
- Psychologists use a range of psychometric tests to complete comprehensive mental health assessments, conduct neuropsychological assessments, evaluate levels of anxiety and depression, conduct forensic risk assessments, etc.
- Clinical psychologists can diagnose different disorders and provide treatment.

Social Work:

- In line with the World Health Organisation's International Classification of Functioning, social workers understand that health conditions both affect and are affected by individual, family and the broader environmental (eg housing, income) factors
- Social workers are trained in various person-centred and systems-oriented theories and approaches including narrative therapy, crisis intervention, bereavement counselling, solution-focused therapy, task-centred case work.
- Social workers are specialists in areas of child protection, domestic violence, victims of crime, trauma and death and dying
- Social workers holistically address complex care needs that involve multi-modal interventions addressing information, emotional and broader resource-related needs
- Social workers are trained to critically analyse the impact of organisational practices, social policies and government legislation on equity of access to health care
- Social workers understand both the strengths and limitations of the evidence-based practice movement
- Social workers work intensively with inpatients.