

Disability Insurance & the Psychiatric Resident

Prepared by the Members-in-Training Executive
of the Canadian Psychiatric Association

Psychiatric residents have unique questions and issues with regard to disability insurance. Many are unsure about the need for disability insurance. As well, undertaking personal psychotherapy as part of their education presents potential consequences for insurability to residents in psychiatry.

Should I get personal disability insurance?

Personal disability insurance is separate from the group disability coverage you may have as part of your residency work contract. Group coverage ends when residency ends. There are benefits to getting personal disability insurance while still in medical school or early in residency. Disability packages with no requirement to disclose medical history, relatively low premiums and a number of added features are available to medical students and residents.

I already have personal disability insurance. Will going for psychotherapy now affect my coverage?

If you already have personal disability insurance, check to see if there are any features of your policy which would require proof of medical in future. For example, future income options which allow you to increase your insured amount sometimes require proof of medical. If there are features which may require proof of medical in future, psychotherapy could affect your full eligibility.

Can going for personal psychotherapy affect my eligibility for disability insurance?

Yes, it can! Almost all psychotherapists must give you some diagnosis to provide psychotherapy. Even if they don't, you are required to disclose any kind of counselling or treatment you may have received on medical forms for insurance. If you do not already have personal disability insurance, and are required to provide medical information when you apply for insurance, this could result in an exclusion for certain illnesses or conditions being placed on your disability insurance. For example, if you saw a psychotherapist who diagnosed you with an anxiety or adjustment disorder in order to bill or justify giving you psychotherapy, your insurance may not cover you if you ever need sick leave for stress or psychiatric illness. In other cases, psychiatrists have been denied disability coverage altogether or been forced to pay higher premiums by certain providers because of therapy received for educational purposes.

What if I don't have personal disability insurance and I have already gone for psychotherapy?

Don't panic! Talk to your insurance broker. If your residency program requires or recommends psychotherapy as part of your education, get an official letter verifying this. You can also get a letter from your psychotherapist verifying that the therapy was for educational purposes. The disability insurance provider may not put an exclusion on your policy if it is clear you have no pre-existing condition. Your insurance broker can help you negotiate the terms of your insurance. Also remember that there are many insurance companies who provide disability insurance to doctors who would be more than happy to accommodate your needs. Don't forget to "shop around"--if you run into problems with a particular provider, the answer may be simply a mouse click or a phone call away.



what **you**
should know



www.cpa-apc.org

Canadian Psychiatric Association
Dedicated to quality care

Association des psychiatres du Cana:
Dévouée aux soins de qualité

Acknowledgements: Jeannie Haslett Insurance Solutions Ltd Diane Gagné Insurance OMA Insurance Terry Zavitz Insurance