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# **The Quality of Medication Treatment for Mental Disorders in the Department of Veterans Affairs and in Private-Sector Plans**

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### **American Psychiatric Association**

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## **Abstract**

### **Objective:**

The quality of mental health care provided by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) was compared with care provided to a comparable population treated in the private sector.

### **Methods:**

Two cohorts of individuals with mental disorders (schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder, major depression, and substance use disorders) were created with VA administrative data (N=836,519) and MarketScan data (N=545,484). The authors computed VA and MarketScan national means for seven process-based quality measures related to medication evaluation and management and estimated national-level performance by age and gender.

### **Results:**

In every case, VA performance was superior to that of the private sector by more than 30%. Compared with individuals in private plans, veterans with schizophrenia or major depression were more than twice as likely to receive appropriate initial medication treatment, and veterans with depression were more than twice as likely to receive appropriate long-term treatment.

### **Conclusions:**

Findings demonstrate the significant advantages that accrue from an organized, nationwide system of care. The much higher performance of the VA has important clinical and policy implications.

<http://ps.psychiatryonline.org/doi/abs/10.1176/appi.ps.201400537>