WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A PSYCHOLOGIST AND A PSYCHIATRIST?

Psychologists and Psychiatrists both work in the area of mental health, and often work together. However, there are some significant differences between the two professions in the following areas:

- Psychologists help mentally healthy people find ways of functioning better. Some psychologists specialise in treating people with a mental illness.

- Psychiatrists mainly treat people with a mental illness, such as schizophrenia.

- Psychologists study human behaviour in their undergraduate and postgraduate degrees before undertaking supervised experience and gaining registration, they do not have a medical degree, however many study for a similar number of years to specialise in various aspects of psychology. For example, clinical psychologists study for at least six years to attain their qualifications.

- Psychiatrists have a medical degree, which involves six years of studying general medicine, followed by further study to specialise in psychiatry.

- Psychologists cannot prescribe medication. Their treatments are based on changing behaviour without medication. There is a considerable amount of evidence showing psychological treatments are effective.

- Psychiatrists can prescribe medication. Some combine medication with other forms of therapy.