

when it's considered acceptable, noted Dr. Benoit Mulsant, chair of the department of psychiatry at the University of Toronto. For example, the Central Intelligence Agency will ask for psychiatric evaluations of world leaders who haven't been examined in person. Kim Jong-un's mental state has almost certainly been opined upon by psychiatrists, he said. When a judge requests a psychiatric assessment of a person whom the psychiatrist hasn't met, the assessment relies on materials collected by others. But in such cases, the limitations of the evaluations are understood, said Mulsant.

Other instances are more controversial, he said. He pointed to a recent case in Ontario, in which an optician discovered that a psychiatrist had rendered an opinion

about his mental health without meeting or speaking with him. The evaluation was based solely on emails and a few documents. The optician learned of the report during a legal battle; his opponents had commissioned it. The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario [initially ruled](#) that the physician's conduct was appropriate. On appeal, however, it said that the psychiatrist [should not have released the findings](#) to a third party without the patient's consent.

One reason for The Goldwater Rule is the likelihood of error in a diagnosis made at a distance. A proper diagnosis requires much more than "a review of television appearances, tweets, and public comments," the American Psychiatric Association noted in its statement. "The stan-

dards in our profession require review of medical and psychiatric history and records and a complete examination of mental status. Often collateral information from family members or individuals who know the person well is included, with permission from the patient."

Armchair diagnosis can also harm trust in the medical profession, according to Brendan Leier, a clinical ethicist at the John Dossetor Health Ethics Centre. Doctors are stewards of an inherited trust. "What you do can undermine that trust," he said, because diagnosing public figures on cable TV could cause you to be perceived more as a political advocate than a physician.

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