
Dr. Deepak Penesetti, MD

Child, Adolescent, and Adult Psychiatrist | Health Equity Innovator | Media & Mental Health Strategist

Dr. Deepak Penesetti is a board-certified psychiatrist specializing in child, adolescent, and adult psychiatry, with a career spanning clinical practice, translational research, health equity leadership, and media-based mental health advocacy. He currently serves as a psychiatrist at the Mohawk Valley Health System. Prior to this, he was Co-Director of the Entertainment Therapy Research and Development Fund at NYU School of Medicine's Institute for Excellence in Health Equity, where his work bridged group therapy, play science, and digital media to tackle loneliness and improve mental health literacy at scale.

A graduate of NYU School of Medicine and the Mount Sinai Triple Board Residency Program (Pediatrics, Adult Psychiatry, Child & Adolescent Psychiatry), Dr. Penesetti has held leadership roles in both clinical and public mental health sectors. He has also recently served as Chief Innovation & Medical Officer at The Child Center of NY, leading a community wellness initiative that served over 60,000 families across New York City. He previously chaired the American Psychiatric Association's Division of Health Equity under the SAMHSA Minority Fellowship Program.

An early advocate of digital solutions for mental health, Dr. Penesetti co-founded HelloSession Inc., a flexible care delivery platform, and was also founder and CEO of Session, a mental health tech startup acquired in 2021. He has served as a consulting producer and mental health strategist for Netflix, Disney, Hulu, and iHeartMedia, including projects with Brie Larson, Oprah Winfrey, and Queen Latifah.

Dr. Penesetti's research focuses on leveraging the science of play, affinity groups, and recovery-oriented cognitive therapy to foster adaptive modes of self in youth—especially at the developmental crossroads of the digital age. His scholarly work includes peer-reviewed publications in *Cerebral Cortex* and *JAMA Pediatrics*, national speaking engagements including APA and Grand Rounds lectures, and mentorship of medical trainees across psychiatry subfields.

Driven by a passion for inclusive storytelling, Dr. Penesetti is also the creator and host of innovative public events such as *Fashion on Trial* and *Outside In*, which use immersive theater and debate formats to promote mental wellness. His work has earned him numerous accolades, including the 2015 SAMHSA Minority Fellowship Award, the 2024 "Hope in Action" Award from Mount Sinai, and invitations to advise Fortune 500 companies, city governments, and national nonprofits.

Dr. Penesetti is a frequent media contributor and continues to use entertainment as a platform to destigmatize mental illness, improve access to care, and build healthier communities—one story at a time.