

Health Psychology and its Applications

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Health Psychology

- The aggregate of the specific educational, scientific and professional contributions of the discipline of psychology to the promotion and maintenance of health, the prevention and treatment of illness, the identification of the aetiologic and diagnostic correlates of health, illness and related dysfunction, and the analysis and improvement of the health care system and health policy formulation.

**To promote and maintain
health**

Prevention and treatment of illness

**Focus on the causes and
detection of illness**

**Improve the health care
system and health policy**

Biopsychosocial perspective

- Add the person to the biology
- Acknowledge the social world of the individual

Evidence that psychological factors influence immune mediated diseases

- ◆ Stress, negative affect, clinical depression, social support, and repression/denial can influence both cellular and humoral indicators of immune status
- ◆ Stress and negative affect are involved in disease onset and progression for some infectious diseases (colds, influenza, herpes)

Health Priorities

Evidence that behavioural
and lifestyle factors are increasing
in their contribution to disease burden
major causes of death
and disability

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- National Psychology Week
- Survey completed
- Confirmed the anecdotes

Leading causes of disease burden

Developing Nations with High Mortality

- Underweight
- Unsafe sex
- Unsafe water
- Indoor smoke
- Zinc deficiency
- Iron deficiency
- Vitamin A deficiency
- Blood pressure
- Tobacco
- Cholesterol
- Alcohol
- Low fruit /vegetable intake

Leading causes of disease burden

Developed Nations	
Tobacco	Blood pressure
Alcohol	Cholesterol
Body mass index	Low fruit & veg. intake
Physical inactivity	Illicit drugs
Unsafe sex	Iron deficiency
Lead exposure	Childhood sexual abuse

optimal health

Health ... a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease.

wellbeing, disease
resistance, hardiness,
optimism, resiliency,
wellness, vitality

Evidence for interventions serving market demands. Interventions important to consumers and health providers.

Health Target	Treatment	Prevention
Chronic Fatigue Syndrome	★ ★	O
Digestion, stomach/ bowel disorders	★	⌘
Headache Pain	★ ★	⌘
Muscular/ skeletal and joint problems	★ ★	★ ★
Sleep disorders	★ ★	⌘

- O Limited investigation.
- ⌘ Warrants further research.
- ★ Evidence for implementation.
- ★ ★ Evidence for outcome effectiveness.
- ★ ★ ★ Evidence for effective dissemination.

Pain

- Very good evidence that psychological treatments, principally relaxation and cognitive behavioural therapy, are effective in reducing the severity and frequency of chronic headache in children and adolescents.

Muscular/ skeletal and joint problems

Exercise interventions reduce the risk of osteoporosis in postmenopausal women (OR = 1.79 vs C).

Asthma

- Family therapy may be a useful adjunct to medication for children with asthma.
- Unable to draw firm conclusions for the role of psychological interventions for children with asthma... highlights the need for well-conducted and reported randomised trials in this area.

Twelve trials 588 children,

Multiple Sclerosis

Reasonable evidence that cognitive behavioural approaches are beneficial in the treatment of depression, and in helping people adjust to, and cope with, having Multiple Sclerosis

Evidence for interventions addressing health priorities.

Health Target	Treatment	Prevention
Tobacco use	★ ★ ★	★ ★
Alcohol related-harm	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★
Illicit drug harms	★ ★ ★	★ ★
Cancer	★ ★	★ ★ ★
Cardiovascular disease	★ ★	★ ★ ★
Health system costs	★ ★	★ ★

- O** Limited investigation.
- ☒** Evidence is contra-indicative.
- ⌘** Warrants further research.
- ★** Evidence for implementation.
- ★★** Evidence for outcome effectiveness.
- ★★★** Evidence for effective dissemination.

Diabetes

- Exercise significantly improved diabetes symptoms (better glycaemic control and reduced visceral adipose tissue and plasma triglycerides).
- Weight loss strategies using dietary, physical activity, or behavioral interventions produced small weight reductions.

Obesity

Psychological interventions, particularly behavioural and cognitive-behavioural strategies are beneficial in enhancing weight reduction for obesity or overweight

Conclusions

- ◆ Health psychology improves many areas of health
- ◆ Public investment should ensure consumers have the option to utilise health psychology interventions
- ◆ Health psychologists need to be resourced to offer and advocate for effective interventions