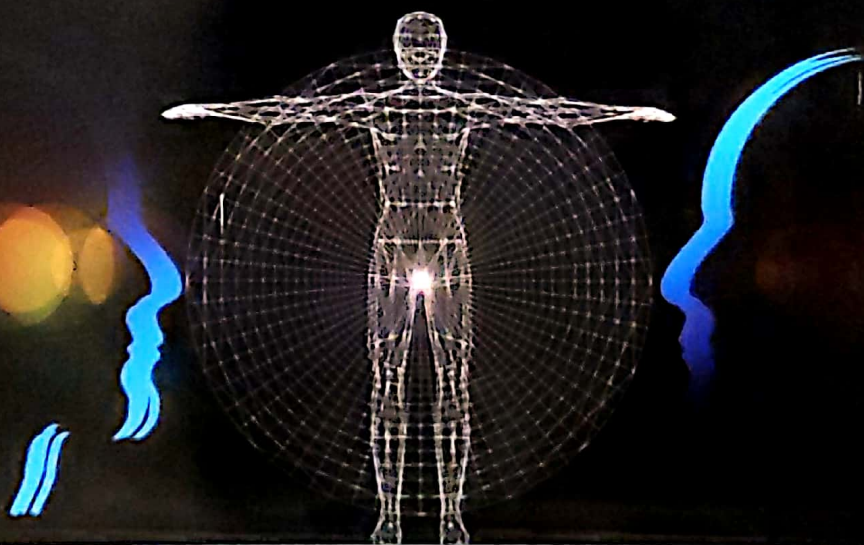


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# Chapter - 5

## Trend of Health Psychology

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### Abstract

Health psychology is a unique sub-field of psychology that examines how psychological, biological, environmental, and social factors impact health and illness. Illness is of course determined in part by genetics or diseases, psychological factors can also have a great deal of impact on a person's health. The nature of our relationships with others also can affect our overall health. By examining how these factors influence each other, we can develop ways to improve our physical and psychological health and well-being. Life is in general more or less stressful, and continuous stress may eventually result in acute or chronic illness or in physical dysfunction. Early efforts in health psychology focused primarily on issues of stress and its health-related consequences but today health psychologists address a much wider range of issues. Health Psychology deals with the various pathways that translate the experience of stress into physiological malfunctioning and physical illness. Health psychologists strive to promote overall health and prevent illness. Health Psychologists can help patients determine how these factors might be affecting their health, and then develop strategies for addressing these behaviours. The goal is to create an impact on the patient's health functioning by making changes in behaviours, coping styles or thought processes. Health psychologists can also help patients who are dealing with chronic conditions or disability. Health psychologists maintain an appreciation of the cultural factors that may influence their clients' health related experiences. Health psychologists have increasingly practiced via patient-centered medical homes in an attempt to better coordinate care among multiple professionals.

**Keywords:** Health psychology, illness, well-being, psychological factors and prevention

### Introduction

#### 1. What is Health?

Health is a state of well-being with physical, cultural, psychosocial, economic and spiritual aspects, not simply the absence of illness. Different

people would describe health in a multitude of ways. A physician is likely to define health as the absence of disease, while the average person might define health more broadly; as the absence of any ill feelings. World Health Organization (WHO) defined health as "the state of complete mental, physical and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease" (WHO, 1947). Health and illness are influenced by a wide variety of factors. While contagious and hereditary illness are common, there are many behavioural and psychological factors that can impact overall physical well-being and various medical conditions. The World Health Organization (WHO) definition not only considers health as mere absence of disease but also emphasizes absence of infirmity, or physical and mental disability. It thus implies rehabilitation as an integral part of any health care programme. A human being is not merely a physical body. We are also located in the social and moral space and consider spiritual living, too, as a genuine part of our existence. This view of health is more inclusive and non-body-centered.

## 1.2 Health Psychology

Health psychology is a relatively new subspecialty within clinical psychology. Health psychology can be defined as the study of how biological, environmental, psychological and socio cultural factors influence health, healthcare and illness. Other terms including medical psychology and behavioural medicine are sometimes used interchangeably with the term health psychology. Health psychology is a holistic approach to health and well-being. Health psychology is an interdisciplinary field concerned with the application of psychological knowledge and techniques to health, illness and health care. Health psychology is primarily concerned with the ways our thoughts, feelings and behaviour influence our physical health. Health psychology is a relatively recent yet fast growing sub-discipline of psychology. Health psychology is concerned with the psychological aspects of the promotion, improvement, and maintenance of health. Health psychology is the field within psychology that studies every aspect from wellness to illness. It focuses on health promotion and maintenance; prevention and treatment of illness; the etiology and correlates of health, illness and dysfunction and improvement of health care system. Health psychology is the aggregate of the special 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 etiologic and diagnostic correlates of health, illness, and related dysfunction. Human beings are complex systems and illness can be caused by a multitude of factors, not just a single factor such as a virus or



bacterium. Health psychology attempts to move away from a simple linear model of health and looks at the combination of factors involved in illness – biological and social. According to health psychology, the whole person should be treated, not just the physical changes that occur due to ill health. This can include behaviour change, encouraging changes in beliefs and coping strategies, and compliance with medical recommendations. Health psychology deals with the etiology and correlates of health, illness, and disability, with the prevention and treatment of diseases, with readjustment during and after illness, and with health promotion.

Health psychology contributes to our understanding of health and illness through patients' adjustment to serious illness, their health beliefs, which influence their behaviour, their mind and body connection, and the psychosocial factors that can reinforce healthy behaviours and prevent negative behaviours. Health psychology suggests that human beings should be seen as complex systems and that illness is caused by a multitude of factors and not by a single causal factor. Health psychology therefore attempts to move away from a simple linear model of health and claims that illness can be caused by a combination of biological and social factors. Health psychology is a field within psychology that is devoted to understanding psychological influences on health-related processes, such as why people become ill, how they respond to illness, how they recover from a disease or adjust to chronic illness, or how they stay healthy in the first place.

## 2. Brief History of Health Psychology

Health has played a significant role throughout the history of psychology. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when people became conscious of their responsibility and control over their personal health, it was no longer exclusive to the medical and allied professional disciplines. This is typical of service societies and with the difficulties of national governments to maintain their health systems as a national responsibility. Health psychology has developed rapidly over its first 25 years and is now an established field. Division 38 of the American Psychological Association (APA) is devoted to health psychology. According to the division, their focus is on better understanding health and illness, studying the psychological factors that impact health and contributing to the health care system and health policy. The field of health psychology is still quite young, emerging during the 1970s to address the rapidly changing field of healthcare. As an identifiable area, health psychology received its first important impetus in 1973, when the Board of Scientific Affairs of the American Psychological Association



(APA) appointed a task force to study the potential for psychology's role in health research. Life expectancy was much lower just 100 years ago, and health concerns then often centered on such things as basic sanitation and avoidance of infectious diseases. Health psychology has emerged to help address these changes in health. In 1982, the journal *Health Psychology* began publication as the official journal of Division 38. Currently, health psychology is not only a well-established division within the American Psychological Association (APA) but is also recognized by the American Psychological Society, another powerful professional organization, one that emphasizes research over clinical practice. In the last two decades, psychological factors have come to be identified as the major cause of a wide range of physical diseases and disabilities. Psychological factors have been found important in the recovery from the physical ailments. The role of psychologists is now well-recognized in the treatment of organic diseases. Patient compliance, doctor-patient communication, attitude change, self-care, etc., are some of the potential areas to which health psychologists are making important contributions. Prior to the emergence of the specialty of health psychology, the academic and professional concerns of this kind were dealt with in specialties like abnormal psychology, community psychology and clinical psychology.

### 3. Importance of Health Psychology

Many researchers believe that physical health may be influenced by psychology through a variety of direct and indirect means. There is some evidence that certain negative mental states such as depression and anxiety can directly affect physical immunity through production of stress hormones, such as the catecholamines and glucocorticoids. Negative emotional states may also indirectly affect disease processes through their influence on health behaviours. Depression has been related to many risk factors for poor health including overeating, smoking, physical inactivity, and poor medication compliance. Health psychology is the use of psychological principles to promote health and to prevent illness; it is also part of clinical treatment for established illnesses. This approach considers the biological, cognitive, behavioural, emotional, social, psychosomatic and environmental factors as they relate to health, illness and health care at the level of individuals. Health psychology's identity as a distinct discipline is a recent accomplishment. Whereas clinical psychology primarily deals with mental health problems: detection, prevention and psychotherapeutic treatment of mental diseases, including appraisal of mental health, health psychology outgrew from its parent discipline to deal with physical health and illnesses also. The field of



health psychology grew with the realization and research evidence that psychological knowledge can make important contribution in the wide range of health-related domains, such as coping with stress, pain management, sleep disorders, healing of hospital patients, doctor-patient communication, patient compliance, self-care, etc.

#### **4. Future OF Health Psychology**

For some students health psychology plays a part of their studies for other allied disciplines, such as medicine, nursing, health studies and dentistry. However, in addition to studying health psychology at this preliminary level, an increasing number of students carry out higher degrees in health psychology as a means to develop their careers within this field. This has resulted in a range of debates about the future of health psychology and the possible roles for a health psychologist- clinical health psychologist, professional health psychologist and academic health psychologist.

#### **5. Clinical Health Psychologist**

A clinical health psychologist has been defined as someone who merges clinical psychology with its focus on the assessment and treatment of individuals in distress and the content field of health psychology. In order to practice as a clinical health psychologist, it is generally accepted that someone would first gain training as a clinical psychologist and then later acquire an expertise in health psychology, which would involve an understanding of the theories and methods of health psychology and their application to the health care setting. A trained clinical health psychologist would tend to work within the field of physical health, including stress and pain management, rehabilitation for patients with chronic illnesses or the development of interventions for problems such as spinal cord injury and disfiguring surgery.

#### **6. Professional Health Psychologist**

A professional health psychologist is someone who is trained to an acceptable standard in health psychology and works as a health psychologist. Although still being considered by a range of committees, it is now generally agreed that a professional health psychologist should have competence in three areas: research, teaching and consultancy. In addition, they should be able to show a suitable knowledge base of academic health psychology, normally by completing a higher degree in health psychology. Having demonstrated that they meet the required standards, a professional health psychologist could work as an academic within the higher education system, within the health promotion setting, within schools or industry, and/or within



the health service. The work could include research, teaching and the development and evaluation of interventions to reduce risk-related behaviour.

### **7. Academic Health Psychologist**

An academic health psychologist usually has a first degree in psychology and then completes a master in health psychology and a Ph.D. in a health psychology-related area. The career of an academic involves teaching at all levels project supervision for students, carrying out research, writing books and research articles in peer review journals and presenting work at conferences. Most academics also have an administrative role such as managing the examination process or directing the teaching programmes for undergraduate or postgraduate students.

### **8. Relationships with Other Professions**

Health psychology is an interdisciplinary field with theoretical and practical links with many other professions. Health psychology overlaps with many other subfields or professional activities of psychology. These overlapping subfields and activities are concerned with the independent application of psychological principles and methods to health, illness and health care. Health psychology is primarily concerned with physical health, illness, and health care although it is recognized that mental and physical health are highly interrelated. Clinical psychology is primarily concerned with assessing, predicting, preventing, and alleviating cognitive, emotional, and behavioural disorders and disabilities. Areas of overlap exist between health psychology and many other types of psychology: community psychology, organizational/occupational psychology, work psychology, rehabilitation psychology, educational psychology, and forensic psychology. To the extent that the psychology discipline is concerned with arriving at a better understanding of behaviour and experience and in the improvement of wellbeing, all aspects of psychology have relevance to the psychology of health in its broadest sense.

### **9. Significance of Health Psychology**

A number of trends within medicine, psychology, and the health care system have combined to make the emergence of health psychology inevitable. As there are a great number of psychosocial studies related to health problems it is difficult not only to establish a list of specific fields of application, but also to find a categorization agreed to by the whole health community of professionals. As can be seen below, the sensitivity, the ideology from a wide perspective, and the academic training of these



professionals could help to establish some kind of taxonomy. Supportive health sensitivity looks at health topics taking into account the diversity and characteristics of human groups and how illness occurs.

#### 10. Aspects to Health Psychology

- **Mind-Body Connection:** This includes the importance of peoples' adjustment following the diagnosis of a disease, death, or injury.
- **Psychological Adjustments:** Psychological states, such as depression and anxiety, can alter immune function and other biological processes, leading to poor health practice and diminished use of health care.
- **Preventing Disease:** Health psychologists promote health and hope that in return it will prevent disease. There are many chronic illnesses that can be prevented. The leading causes of death are heart disease, lung disease, cancer and complications from substance abuse.
- **Optimism:** An optimistic attitude and related behaviours are linked to better reports of physical health and faster recovery from illness.
- **Social Support:** Health psychologists have extensively studied the positive relationships between social support, mental health, and physical health. The notion of social support in health psychology is conceptualized as including both social embeddedness and emotional support that informs the people suffering from diseases that they are valued and cared about. Social support, either elicited or provided spontaneously goes a long way in determining how people deal with the life challenges and threats. Supportive interactions and the presence of supportive relationships in people's lives have been shown to play a major role in emotional well-being and physical health. The appropriateness of a special kind of support seems to be dependent on the match between the type of support and the nature of problem encountered at a point in the life course and also who is the provider of that support. Practical, emotional and appraisal support is highly beneficial in health and healing. The relationships among social support and health may depend on number factors including race, gender, and culture. Women seem to benefit more from social support than do men; this may be because women tend to have more emotionally intimate relationships. The relationship between social support and health is complex.



## 11. Cultural Factors in Health Psychology

It is crucial for health psychologist to fully appreciate the impact of cultural factors on the health and illness-related experiences of their clients. In fact, research has indicated that health psychology interventions that have been adapted for particular cultural groups are typically more effective than similar interventions that have not been culturally adapted. As a starting point, it is vital for health psychologists to recognize the disparities that exist in health care between various ethnic groups, as well as the divergent attitudes of members of these groups towards the medical establishment. The historical context of these rankings, including the centuries of oppression suffered by African Americans and Native Americans in the United States, cannot be ignored. These historical factors undoubtedly relate to the perceptions held by members of these cultural groups regarding hospitals and physicians. "For health psychologists, appreciation of the discrepancies between cultural groups regarding health care experiences and attitudes is an essential component of cultural competence.

Cultural factors can also play a powerful role in determining the way medically ill people understand the source of their medical problems. It is essential for health psychologists to remember that in a diverse culture, some individuals will maintain an external, rather than internal, locus of control regarding their health problems that may run counter to the assumptions of western medicine. An appreciation of this difference, along with corresponding adjustments in practice, can ultimately enhance client health. Culturally competent health psychologists also appreciate that, compared with white clients, members of ethnic minority groups may hold different expectations regarding the type of care they will receive and the types of interactions they will have with their caregivers. These methods may include medicinal plants and herbs, massage, acupuncture, acupressure, prayer, chants, or other methods. Additionally, these methods often don't involve the type of quick, fact-based, yes/no questioning that characterizes many physicians-patient interactions in western culture. To overcome these discrepancies, health psychologists can play a facilitative role by educating both health care's providers and multicultural clients about the expectations of the other party, thereby increasing the effectiveness of the interventions. It is important for health psychologists to suspend judgment about how clients from diverse ethnic backgrounds may perceive their illnesses or approach their treatment.

## 12. Current Issues in Health Psychology

Health psychologists engage in a wide variety of activities, the following are just a few of the current issues in health psychology-



- Stress Reduction
- Weight Management
- Smoking Cessation
- Improving Daily Nutrition
- Reducing Risky Sexual Behaviours
- Hospice Care and Grief Counseling for Terminal Patients
- Preventing Illness
- Understanding the Effects of Illness
- Improving Recovery
- Teaching Coping Skills

### 13. The Biomedical Model of Health

The biomedical model of disease is compatible with infectious diseases that were the leading causes of death 100 years ago. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, adherence to the biomedical model allowed medicine to conquer or control many of the diseases that once ravaged humanity. When chronic illnesses began to replace infectious diseases as leading causes of death, questions began to arise about the adequacy of the biomedical model. The biomedical model has managed to attain world-wide acceptance and has been adopted as an official health care programme by almost all countries. It considers disease as a form of biological malfunctioning; some kind of biochemical imbalance or Neuro physiological disturbance. According to the biomedical model of medicine, diseases came from outside the body, invaded the body and caused physical changes within the body, or originated as internal involuntary physical changes. Such diseases may be caused by several factors such as chemical imbalances, bacteria, viruses and genetic predisposition.

A few physicians, many psychologists, and some sociologists have become dissatisfied with the biomedical model and have begun to question its usefulness in dealing with the current patterns of disease and death and its definition of health. Because illness is seen as arising from biological changes beyond their control, individuals are not seen as responsible for their illness. They are regarded as victims of some external force causing internal changes. Within the biomedical model, health and illness are seen as qualitatively different—you are either healthy or ill, there is no continuum between the two. The biomedical model has serious limitations in terms of its adequacy for health practices. The model treats a patient as an organism, a



biological entity. The proponents of this model were more interested in the disease than the patient. Biomedical practices envisage no role for the patient and his or her support group in the process of diagnosis and in deciding about the course of treatment. The model breaks down when it comes to the preventive health care, where there are no cooperative-captive patients; where people are under no compulsion to comply with the prescribed health procedures. Within traditional biomedicine, illness may have psychological consequences, but not psychological causes.

#### **14. The Biopsychosocial Model of Health**

An alternative model of health has evolved, one that advocates a holistic approach to medicine. This holistic model considers social, psychological, physiological or even spiritual aspects of a person's health. This alternative model is known as bio psychosocial model, the approach to health that includes biological, psychological and social influences. According to bio psychosocial view, health is much more than the absence of disease. A person who has no disease condition is not sick, but this person may not be healthy, either. The biopsychosocial model was developed by Engel (1977) and represented an attempt to integrate the psychological (the 'psycho') and the environmental (the 'social') into the traditional biomedical (the 'bio') model of health.

#### **15. Health Behaviour**

The importance of behaviour for health and healthcare has clearly been established and even recognised to have importance at government level. Health behaviour is any activity people perform to maintain or improve their health, regardless of their perceived health status or whether the behaviour actually achieves that goal. Many health conditions are caused by behaviours, for example problem drinking, substance use, smoking, reckless driving, overeating. Behaviours, habits, and lifestyles can affect both health and disease. Everything from smoking, excessive drinking, or poor diet to deficient hygiene practices have been implicated. Such behaviours are often deeply rooted in cultural values or personal needs and expectations. Cognitive variables may influence our decisions about adopting healthy or unhealthy behaviours. To cite one example, many health psychologists have focused on the variable self-efficacy. Behaviour however is not only linked to illness onset but also to the management of illness and health outcomes.

Smoking, alcohol consumption, diet, gaps in primary care services and low screening uptake are all significant determinants of poor health and changing such behaviours should lead to improved health. In the USA,



Healthy People 2000 (US Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS] 1990) lists increased physical activity, changes in nutrition and reductions in tobacco, alcohol and drug use as important for health promotion and disease prevention.

### **Smoking**

Smoking is the health behaviour most closely linked with long-term negative health outcomes. Morbidity and mortality from coronary heart disease are increased among smokers. Smoking has also been linked to a number of cancers, including cancer of the lung, throat, stomach and bowel as well as a number of more immediate negative health effects such as reduced lung capacity and bronchitis. Those who quit smoking reduce the risk to their health, particularly if they quit before 35 years of age.

### **Diet**

The impact of diet upon morbidity and mortality are well established. In the Third World, the problems related to diet and health is ones of under-nutrition; in the First World, the problems are predominantly linked to overconsumption of food. Excess consumption of calories combined with insufficient exercise has made obesity a major health problem. Diet has been implicated in cardiovascular diseases, strokes and high blood pressure, cancer, diabetes, obesity, osteoporosis, and dental disease. It is generally agreed that elevated blood cholesterol level is a major risk factor for the development of cardiovascular diseases.

### **Exercise**

The potential health benefits of engaging in regular exercise include reduced cardiovascular morbidity and mortality, lowered blood pressure, and the increased metabolism of carbohydrates and fats, as well as a range of psychological benefits such as improved self-esteem, positive mood states, reduced life stress and anxiety. Participation in regular exercise is strongly related to a number of socio demographic variables. In particular, young people and males are more likely to engage in regular exercise.

### **Health Screening**

Individuals may seek to protect their health by participating in various screening programs which attempt to detect disease at an early, or asymptomatic, stage. Screening programs have been set up for various diseases, including anemia, diabetes, bronchitis, cervical cancer, and breast cancer. Considering breast cancer it has been estimated that breast screening programs which include mammograms can reduce breast cancer mortality by up to 40 percent among women aged 50 and over.



## **Alcohol Use**

Moderate alcohol consumption has been linked to positive health outcomes. However, high alcohol consumption has been linked to a range of negative health outcomes including high blood pressure, heart disease and cirrhosis of the liver. High levels of alcohol consumption have also been associated with accidents, injuries, suicides, crime, domestic violence, rape, murder. While many of the adverse effects of high alcohol consumption are due to continued heavy drinking others are more specifically related to excessive alcohol consumption in a single drinking session.

## **16. Health Behaviour and Sociodemographic Factors**

Demographic variables show reliable associations with the performance of health behaviours. A variety of factors have been found to account for individual differences in the performance of health behaviours. There is a curvilinear relationship between many health behaviours and age, with high incidences of many health risking behaviours such as smoking in young adults and much lower incidences in children and older adults. Such behaviours also vary by gender, with females being generally less likely to smoke, consume large amounts of alcohol, engage in regular exercise, but more likely to monitor their diet, take vitamins and engage in dental care. Social factors seem to be important in instilling health behaviours in childhood. Parent, sibling and peer influences are important, for example in the initiation of smoking. Cultural values also have a major impact, for instance in determining the number of women exercising in a particular culture.

## **17. Models of Health Behaviour Change**

Health behaviour describes three categories of models: motivational, behavioural enactment and multistage. Motivational models are based on the assumption that drive is enough for successful behavioural enactment and therefore focus on the motivational factors that determine performance. As intention is considered to be the most proximal determinant of behaviour, it is widely used as the dependent variable in research founded on motivational models.

## **18. Motivational Models**

The motivational models have been created to predict health behaviour at particular points in time. They were also elaborated in order to discover the variables that determine health behaviour and assess their ability to predict it (Armitage & Conner, 2000). In the following paragraphs we are



going to briefly describe and review the efficacy of the following models: the health belief model, protection motivation theory, social cognitive theory, the theory of reasoned action and the theory of planned behaviour.

- i) **The Health Belief Model:** The health belief model was developed initially by Rosen stock in 1966 and further by Becker and colleagues throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Over recent years, the health belief model has been used to predict a wide variety of health-related behaviours. According to the health belief model, behaviour is a product of a set of core beliefs that have been redefined over the years. This model assumes that the likelihood of a person engaging in a specific health behaviour is a function of several beliefs- susceptibility to illness, the severity of the illness, the costs involved in carrying out the behaviour, the benefits involved in carrying out the behaviour, cues to action, which may be internal or external. The health belief model suggests that these core beliefs are used to predict the likelihood that a behaviour will occur. In this model behavioural intention is considered a mediating fact or between the above described components and action. The Health Belief Model is a theoretical model that can be used to guide health promotion and disease prevention programs. It is used to explain and predict individual changes in health behaviours. It is one of the most widely used models for understanding health behaviours.
- ii) **Protection Motivation Theory:** Protection Motivation Theory (Rogers, 1975) developed starting from the scientific literature that argued for the effectiveness of fear-arousing communication. The level of induced fear influences the adoption of adaptive responses in a linear way. It has been shown that a medium level of fear brings forth cognitive responses that lead to behavioural implementation. According to the theory, there are two types of information source: environmental and intrapersonal. If applied to dietary change, the protection motivation theory would make the following predictions. Information about the role of a high fat diet in coronary heart disease would increase fear, increase the individual's perception of how serious coronary heart disease was and increase their belief that they were likely to have a heart attack. If the individual also felt confident that they could change their diet and that this change would have beneficial consequences they would report high intentions to change their behaviour. Protection



motivation is the result of perceived severity and perceived vulnerability, as well as response efficacy and self-efficacy. It is a mediating variable that arouses, maintains and guides protective health behaviour. It facilitates the implementation of adaptive behaviours and can be best measured by behavioural intentions. Various studies have shown that protection motivation theory can be used successfully for the prediction of intentions to adopt preventive health behaviour (Boer & Seydel, 1996). However, further research revealed that threat appraisal plays a role in the implementation of protective health behaviours only in the cases where the person is faced with a new threat.

iii) **Social Cognitive Theory:** Social cognitive theory, the cognitive formulation of social learning theory, that has been best articulated by Bandura explains human behaviour in terms of a three-way, dynamic, reciprocal model in which personal factors, environmental influences, and behaviour continually interact. Social cognitive theory synthesizes concepts and processes from cognitive, behaviorist, and emotional models of behaviour change, so it can be readily applied to nutritional intervention for disease prevention and management. A basic premise is that people learn not only through their own experiences, but also by observing the actions of others and the results of those actions. Key constructs of social cognitive theory that are relevant to nutritional intervention include observational learning, reinforcement, self-control, and self-efficacy. Principles of behaviour modification, which have often been used to promote dietary change, are derived from social cognitive theory. Some elements of behavioural dietary interventions based on social cognitive theory constructs of self-control, reinforcement, and self-efficacy include goal setting, self-monitoring and behavioural contracting. Social cognitive theory incorporates the basic parts of social learning theory but adds the principles of observational learning and vicarious reinforcement.

iv) **The Theory of Reasoned Action:** Theory of reasoned action states that the most proximal cause of behaviour is one's intention to adopt the targeted action. Intentions represent a person's motivation that takes the form of a conscious plan to exercise a certain amount of effort and perform the desired behaviour. Thus, the more a person wants to adopt a behaviour, the more it is likely to do so. If the behavioural outcomes are perceived as desirable, a person is



more likely to have a positive attitude towards that particular behaviour. For instance, if adopting a low fat diet is perceived as leading to weight loss and weight loss is valued as being helpful, the person will develop a positive attitude towards adopting a low fat diet.

- v) **The Theory of Planned Behaviour:** The theory of planned behaviour was developed by Ajzen (1988). The basic assumption of theory of planned behaviour is the fact that beliefs are the fundamental determinants of any behaviour and therefore, risk behaviour can be changed by modifying the underlying beliefs. According to this behaviour attitudes, social norms and perceived behavioural control influence intention that represents the proximal determinant of behaviour. The importance of the theory of planned behaviour is that it emphasises the role of intentions in the undertaking of health behaviour. Perceived behavioural control is the individual's perception regarding the extent to which performing certain behaviour is easy or difficult.

Perceived behavioural control is determined by perceived presence or absence of resources and opportunities and the perceived ability of these to induce or hinder performance. Successful behaviour change can be achieved when intentions are changed thorough either attitudes, subjective norms or perceived behavioural control. Both the Theory of Reasoned Action and the Theory of Planned Behavior have been used to predict several health behaviours: smoking, drinking, dental behaviour, health screening and AIDS preventive behaviour.

## 19. How Can Health Psychology Help People

Health psychology is a rapidly growing field. As increasing numbers of people seek to take control of their own health, more and more people are seeking health-related information and resources. Health psychologists are focused on educating people about their own health and well-being, so they are perfectly suited to fill this rising demand. Healthy psychology can benefit individuals in a number of different ways. Many professionals in this field work specifically in the areas of prevention and focus on helping people prevent health problems before they start. This may include helping people maintain a healthy weight, avoid risky or unhealthy behaviours and maintain a positive outlook that can combat stress, depression, and anxiety. Another way that health psychologists can help is by educating and training other health professionals. Health psychologists can help people change



problematic behaviours to improve their overall health and well-being. Individuals who recently learned they have a chronic medical condition may also find health psychology useful, as it can help them work on accepting the diagnosis and altering their lifestyle to manage the condition effectively. Health psychologists can help people with a terminal condition come to terms with it if they are struggling. By incorporating things that have been discovered in the field of health psychology, physicians, nurses, nutritionists, and other health practitioners can better incorporate psychological approaches into how they treat patients.

## 20. Stress and Health

There is a vast literature on stress. Stress is a part of our everyday life. The term stress means many things to many different people. A layperson may define stress in terms of pressure, tension, unpleasant external forces or an emotional response. Stress is normal parts of life that can help us either learn and grow or can cause us significant problems. In our daily lives, we are exposed to situations that produce stress like relationship issues, work overload, family issues, health related problems etc. It is unpleasant and undesirable.

Stress can have serious health implications, increasing the risk of cardiovascular disease and exacerbating medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, and hypertension. At some point in life, every individual experiences some degree of stress; some individuals experience stress more often than others and some have difficulty dealing with stress. Stress can be manifested from any situation or thought that causes an individual to experience frustration, anger, and nervousness, whereas anxiety is a feeling of fear and apprehension. The individual responds to stress in ways that affect the individual as well as their environment. Because of the excess of stress in our modern lives, we usually think of stress as a negative experience, but from a biological point of view, stress can be a neutral, negative, or positive experience. Health can be affected by stressful life events. Severity of chronic illness is linked to stress. Also stress has a negative effect on the immune system. From work to busy schedules, from important relationships to our goals and dreams, we have competing priorities and it's a lot to keep on top of. But while a limited amount of stress is normal, and even healthy, continuous or severe stress can be very harmful to your physical and mental health. When people fail to handle their stress experiences, the mental and physical health problems start surfacing.

The relationship between health and stress is an area in the field of psychology that has been the object of much attention. It has been logically



reasoned that as the amount of stressful life events increases, an individual's health is adversely affected. Many studies have been conducted in the past to prove that the relationship exists. There is an interdisciplinary science known as psychoneuroimmunology devoted specifically to the effects of psychological stress on the immune system. In this field it is a common assumption that stress suppresses the immune system thus causing vulnerability to stress. Environmental stressors are linked to stress. Health can be affected by stressful life events. Severity of chronic illness is linked to stress. Also stress has a negative effect on the immune system. When faced with chronic stress and an over-activated autonomic nervous system, people begin to see a negative impact on their health. The first symptoms are relatively mild, like chronic headaches and increased susceptibility to colds. With more exposure to chronic stress, however, more serious health problems may develop. Stress has been linked to or can exacerbate various medical conditions, such as asthma, fatigue, back pain, arrhythmias, difficulty breathing, headaches, hypertension, irritable bowel syndrome, ulcers, suppression of the immune system, and fluctuations in blood glucose levels in diabetic patients. Both emotional and physical stress can have a significant negative impact on the heart and vascular system. Stress also seems to increase the frequency and severity of migraine headaches. There is scientific evidence indicating that individuals experiencing psychological stress are more prone to developing colds and other infections than their less-stressed peers.

The American Heart Association (2010) reports that various studies suggest that there is a link between the risk of cardiovascular disease and environmental and psychosocial factors. The physiological effect of stress on the body involves a complex chain of events. Stress causes the sympathetic nervous system, a system responsible for mobilizing body resources in urgent situations, to stimulate the adrenal medulla of the adrenal gland. This results in the production of the catecholamines epinephrine and nor epinephrine, whose effects on the body include increased heart rate, respiration, blood flow, and muscle strength. Currently it remains unclear whether immunosuppression is a direct effect of stress or whether it is simply part of the body's response to stressful events.

### 20.1 Types of Stress

Stress can be defined as any type of change that causes physical, emotional or psychological strain. However, not all types of stress are harmful or even negative. There are a few different types of stress that we encounter:



- Eustress, a type of stress that is fun and exciting, and keeps us energized. This is the kind of stress we associate with surges of adrenaline, such as when you are skiing or racing to meet a deadline.
- Acute Stress a very short-term type of stress that can either be positive or more distressing. This is the type of stress we most often encounter in day-to-day life.
- Episodic Acute Stress where acute stress seems to run rampant and be a way of life, crating a life of relative chaos.
- Chronic Stress the type of stress that seems never-ending and inescapable, like the stress of a bad marriage or an extremely taxing job.

## 20.2 Stress and Behaviour

Behaviours, habits, and lifestyles can affect both health and disease. Everything from smoking, excessive drinking, or poor diet to deficient hygiene practices have been implicated. Such behaviours are often deeply rooted in cultural values or personal needs and expectations. Cognitive variables may influence our decisions about adopting healthy or unhealthy behaviours. Stress can affect health through a behavioural pathway or through a physiological pathway. Behaviours that may change as a result of stress include sleep, food intake and alcohol consumption. Stress can also induce changes in the body's biochemicals, such as catecholamines and corticosteroids, and changes in activity such as heart rate. Recent research has examined the effect of stress on specific health-related behaviours such as exercise, smoking, diet and alcohol consumption, in terms of initiation, maintenance and relapse. It has also highlighted the impact of stress on general behavioural change. When under stress a person may smoke more, sleep less, drive faster and be less able to focus on the task in hand, which, in turn, may result in heart disease, cancer or accidents. These changes may increase the chances of heart disease and kidney disease, and leave the body open to infection.

## 21. Role of Psychologist in Health Care

Health psychologists engage in many different tasks related to health and wellness. The specific type of work that a health psychologist does on a daily basis may depend on work setting or specialty area. Many health psychologists work directly in clinical settings to help individuals or groups prevent illness and promote healthy behaviours.

Recent advances in psychological, medical, and physiological research have led to a new way of thinking about health and illness. Health Psychology is the study of psychological and behavioural processes in health, illness and healthcare. It is concerned with understanding how psychological, behavioural and cultural factors are involved in physical health and illness, in addition to the biological causes that are well understood by medical science. Psychological factors can affect health directly and indirectly via a person's own behaviour choices which can harm or protect health. By understanding and harnessing psychological factors, psychologists can improve health by working directly with individual patients. Psychologists provide mental and behavioural health services. They also work in colleges and universities, corporations, and for governmental agencies. Psychologists are on the leading edge of research focusing on the bio psychosocial model in areas such as HIV, oncology, psychosomatic illness, and compliance with medical regimens, health promotion, and the effect of psychological, social, and cultural factors on numerous specific disease processes. Health psychologists work in a wide variety of settings including hospitals, health care clinics, private corporations, and universities. Some health psychologists work in settings that specialize in a particular area of health care such as oncology, pain management, women's health, and smoking cessation programs. Other health psychologists work in government settings, often administering community health programs or influencing public policy. Most of the people have a fear about operation. Sometimes doctors need to postpone operation due to patient's fear. Sometimes patient get some wrong information from society. That makes them more anxious. So psychologist can help to prepare patients for surgery. And after surgery, confusion about prognosis and acceptance of the present condition can make patients depressed and anxious. Here psychologists can help the patient.

## 22. Subfields within Health Psychology

There are a number of distinct specialty areas within health psychology:

- **Clinical Health Psychology:** This subfield of health psychology is strongly linked to clinical psychology and involves activities such as psychotherapy, behaviour modification and health education.
- **Community Health Psychology:** Individuals working in this subfield of health psychology often focus on developing interventions and prevention techniques at the community-level. These professionals may conduct assessments of communities or work with groups to encourage healthy behaviours or promote behaviour change.



- **Public Health Psychology:** These health psychology professionals focus on understanding health at the population-level and often offer advice to health care professionals, government agencies and health educators.
- **Research:** Many health psychologists also conduct research on a variety of health-related issues. For example, researchers may focus on such things as the causes of health problems, effective preventative measures, the best health promotion techniques, how to best help people cope with pain or illness, and how to get people to seek treatment for medical conditions.
- **Occupational Health Psychology:** This is an emerging subfield within health psychology that incorporates industrial-organizational psychology and related disciplines. Occupational health psychologists focus on understanding how workplace issues are linked to both physical and mental illness.

### 23. Health Promotion and Health Education

Many people rely on expensive cures by health care providers because they do not feel responsible for their own health. They believe that there will be effective treatments for all ailments and do not realize that the cure, if possible at all, will be costly in terms of discomfort, time, money, and other resources. *Health promotion* is an umbrella term that includes all educational and political measures to assist people in modifying their lifestyle toward a state of optimal health.

Health education represents a narrower concept. It comprises all teaching and learning arrangements that facilitate voluntary health behaviour change. By this, individuals and groups are offered opportunities, knowledge, skills, and resources to help them refrain from risk behaviours and adopt health behaviours in order to pursue a continuous improvement of their health and wellness. Health education can take place in a variety of settings, including schools and workplaces, and it can be best performed by Health Psychologists or by educators with training in health psychology.

### 24. Targets of Health Psychology

#### Preventing Illness

Psychologists work towards promoting health through behavioural change but they prevent illness in other ways as well. Practitioners emphasize education as a large part of illness prevention, as many people do not recognize the risk to illness present in their lives. Or they are unable to

implement the knowledge that they have owing to the pressures of their everyday existence. A common example of this is anti-smoking campaigns. Health psychologists also aim at educating health professionals like physicians and nurses in communicating with patients:

### **Understanding Behavioural Factors**

Factors that lead to the behaviours that cause illness are of interest because they help psychologists to predict who is most susceptible to illness and why. There are many contributing factors that help determine our behaviours. Health psychologists seek to identify the behaviours and experiences that promote health, lead to illness, influence the effectiveness of health care, and recommend improvements to health policy in their life. Psychologically, people with high stress jobs are more likely to develop cardiovascular disease. Socially, people with low incomes have less access to health resources and screening processes. Biologically, physical addiction plays an important role in smoking cessation. Health psychologists also aim to change health behaviours for the dual purpose of helping people stay healthy and helping patients adhere to disease treatment regimens.

### **Health Policy**

Health psychologists are exploring how health policy can impact on inequities, inequalities and social injustice. This expands the scope of health psychology beyond the level of individual health to an examination of the social and economic determinants of health experience both within and between regions and nations.

### **Effects of Disease Explore**

When illness or accidents befall a person, their entire life is affected. A psychologically healthy individual who gets severely injured say now has many different practical issues to contend with that will in turn affect their psychological wellbeing. There is much to know about how disease affects our mental well-being. This important field of study considers how those with terminal illnesses can lead a better life. When there is little hope of recovery, health psychologists can improve the quality of life of the patient by helping them to recover their mental well-being.

### **Doctor-Patient Communication**

Health psychologists attempt to aid the process of communication between doctors and patients during medical consultations. There are many problems in this process, particularly the use of jargon by doctors.

### **25. Patient- Centered Medical Home a New Trend**

In recent years, however, our health care system has been facing a crisis



brought on by a significant shortage of primary care physicians as increasing numbers of physicians in training choose to focus their education on specialized versus general, medical practice. Patient centered medical home have been proposed as a solution for delivering higher quality and more cost-effective primary care. Patient centered medical home aim to provide care that is patient centered highly accessible and affordable and coordinated. They are more holistic in nature, in that they do not view mental health as separate from physical health and they are also more focused on prevention of disease than is the traditional primary care model. In this model each patient has a personal primary care doctor responsible for arranging patient care with other professionals on the patients care team. Behavioural health as a key aspect of the patients care and because clinical health psychologists are uniquely educated to design, implement and assess strategies that address the prevention and management of various health conditions and health psychologists are particularly well trained to serve in leadership position on patient centered medical home care teams.

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