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IN THIS ISSUE: Q&A & UPCOMING EVENTS

“What Health Psychology brings to the Public Health Table” by Jim McManus, Director of Public Health, Hertfordshire County Council

The growing epidemic of non-communicable disease, and the ongoing population wide issues in mental good health and resilience are characteristic of the era we are in. We face a new series of public health challenges where we sometimes struggle to get change. The obesity epidemic is just one example of this. So what are the solutions? We seem to be learning that they are complex (individual, social and environmental manifolds), that they are multiple, and that health psychology is an important contribution to this agenda. Behavioural solutions for preventing ill-health, behaviour change, achieving and sustaining psychological and social resilience and coping with the challenges we face are all key issues for us, across our lives. Psychology has much to offer here, and that is why I want to help this Network in its mission to reach people with an interest in the health of our population, and bring its insights and tools to the challenge. Very little, if anything, in human health, is without a definable psychological component.

From the "unconscious" habit of much behaviour to the cognitive appraisal of things which might (or might not) cause us stress to our attitude and ability to be resilient and thrive and cope with ill-health, the human mind and behaviour plays a significant role in our health and wellbeing. There is a wealth of research behind this. Yes, Health Psychology is still a young field and brings with it methodological and translational challenges, but nonetheless there is much we in public health can use and learn from.

1. Health psychology can bring an understanding of the behavioural aspects of human health which we need urgently for initiating and maintaining courses of action which prevent avoidable disease. Motivational, cognitional and unconscious aspects of human behaviour and habit are amenable to interventions based on these. (For example, stress appraisal methods for coping with stress and psychological techniques for managing breathlessness in heart failure.)
2. Health psychologists can help with expanding the evidence base in addressing challenges where evidence is currently limited or silent: they are skilled at that part of the scientific process which is generating, testing and evaluating theory led hypotheses, interventions and evaluations in areas where evidence is currently silent
3. Psychology has a great deal to offer across primary, secondary and tertiary prevention. From psychological aspects of quitting smoking to managing one's weight to coping with pain, and coping with long term physical and psychological ill-health
4. Clinicians can benefit from the study of patient-professional interaction which health psychology has championed. Regimen adherence, getting the best out of consultations and enabling clinicians to help people change their behaviour are all outcomes from this rich stream within health psychology.

Public Health has a long and proud tradition of absorbing the best insights of other sciences and social sciences in its journey. Health Psychology and other areas of applied psychological science are no exception. I have listed above some health psychology contributions. I could equally have talked of applying organizational psychology to understand health in the workplace, or applying developmental psychology to the challenge of the Marmot Objective "giving every child the best start in life." We are in a time where public health and psychology (especially health psychology) can and should mutually enrich their perspectives, tools and techniques for improving and sustaining human health.

This Network will be an important part of that. Bringing together practitioners with an interest in public health to learn and critique health psychological insights is one part of it. Supporting health psychologists in learning and critiquing population/public health insights is another. Enabling more transfer of knowledge, skill and insight will also lead to people who increasingly straddle the boundaries of the two in their professional practice, be they employees or volunteers. Indeed, interdisciplinarity for some within the network is already a reality.

The ability to absorb and work across disciplines has brought me personally some challenges, but has brought me nothing but benefit in the long term, and I am excited by the opportunity this network affords its members. I have already learned much from the people I have met. The test of this network will be in how well we support its members in serving our populations. From what I see, we are off to a good start.



Health Psychology in Public Health

by Dr Angel Chater,
Health Psychologist,
University College London

"It is an exciting time for health psychology and public health, with more work now than ever that helps us to understand the core

features of behaviour change essential for maintaining health and preventing or managing illness. The new East of England Health Psychology in Public Health Network is a prime example of how we can get the discipline of health psychology more entwined in the public health agenda. There has been an epidemiological shift in the leading causes of death over the last few centuries from those that were communicable in nature to now those that are heavily influenced by lifestyle choices. Behaviours such as what we eat, how much activity we engage in, our use of substances, uptake of screening and how well we follow medical advice are all influenced not only by our biological make-up but by our thoughts, feelings and the environment in which we live. And although much of health psychology to an outsider may sound like common sense, it is not. As we, as human beings are not rational decision makers, and it is essential that those working in a public health setting are able to understand what motivates behaviour and how best to facilitate behaviour change. For public health to make a difference to the current mortality and morbidity figures we need to consider these factors when trying to tackle issues of epidemic level such as obesity, diabetes and coronary heart disease and this new network will be a great arena to explore how we can get health psychology

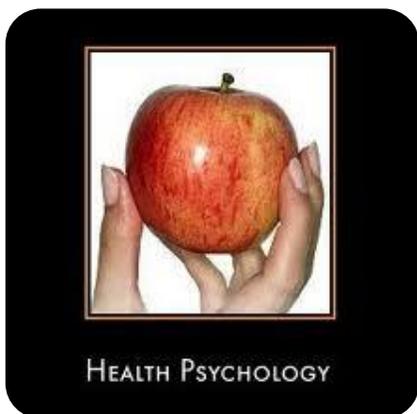
more into public health. What we need now is for those trained in health psychology and those working in public health to create a more fluid dialogue to make this happen. There are a number of highly skilled trainees and health psychologists working in the area of Public Health with skills in advanced research methods, theoretically-driven intervention design and behaviour change. However, there are few posts advertised in health psychology as often those who are holding the purse-strings do not know what health psychology is and what it could offer. Public health could benefit from harnessing the skills of health psychologists to understand the decision making process of behaviours that are linked to epidemiological trends and develop psycho-social programmes to target health promotion and disease reduction, as well as evaluating how to create a most effective healthcare system. For those who do not know about health psychology, now is the time to find out about it!"

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BRITISH PSYCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
www.bps.org.uk

Reflection on the new Health Psychology Public Health Network Events by Michelle Constable



As a trainee starting out on my stage 2 journey 'Building a career in Health Psychology' was perfectly timed. The pathway for stage 2 can be unclear and listening to Dr Angel Chater, Dr Laura Elwell and Dr Erica Cook share their stage 2 journeys was inspirational and reassuring. It was interesting to see different ways of meeting the competencies, the variety of projects undertaken and the differences between the Independent and Doctorate routes. The workshop on 5th March with Jim McManus, Director of Public Health, Hertfordshire County Council and Dr Falko

Sniehotta focused on using a systems approach when considering how to improve public health. This was a new way of thinking for many of us and is something that will take some thought and practice. I am certain that this session will be the focus of future sessions and is something that the network will want to develop further.

Both workshops were fantastic events and the opportunities for networking were fantastic, the room was buzzing! I have met with colleagues from a wide range of organisations and I am excited by the potential within the group. I am looking forward to the 'Smoking and Health Psychology' workshop on 28th May and the opportunity to continue networking and meeting new colleagues.

Embracing the challenge of applying health psychology to public health issues

by Neil Howlett

I attended the Hertfordshire Public Health Conference in December and have attended both the Health Psychology in Public Health events this year. What struck me is that there is a real desire to share knowledge and develop the best approaches to improving public health. I am excited to be involved in this journey and what follows is a bit about me and the challenge of contributing to public health in Hertfordshire.

I am a research fellow at the University of Hertfordshire with a passion for Health Psychology. I am particularly interested in exploring the ways in which we can encourage more physical activity and healthier eating. I have conducted research and published in other areas. Although these were all interesting avenues, to adopt a research career I always felt I needed the combination of two things – a passion for the area personally and to feel like it had the potential to make tangible differences to real people. It has been great building research and expertise in the area of Health Psychology ever since.



My first introduction to the potential that health psychology could have for public health was helping with a community intervention in West Norfolk that attempted to improve the wellbeing of hard-to-reach residents using novel methods. The approach was called 'Do Something Different' (created by Professors Ben Fletcher and Karen Pine).

The basic premise was to encourage residents to break down small behavioural habits (tv watching, places they sit, ways they communicate with loved ones) so that they become more flexible and more able to embrace healthier behaviours. Without changing smaller supporting habits, key behaviours like sedentary lifestyles, smoking and poor diet are much more resistant to change.

This experience gave me a great insight into the challenges that decision makers and practitioners in public health face in successfully applying theoretical approaches in real world environments. Simple things like choosing the right measurement approaches, pitching the supporting engagement and training local community champions in a way that is easily translated into their everyday jobs are all essential to deliver effective community programmes. There are also larger environmental and systemic challenges such as lack of transport, poor availability of healthy affordable foods and lack of buy-in from key members of supporting organisations that can dampen the effectiveness of even the most well-designed approaches.



This project sparked my interest in psychological health approaches in the real world and this flame has continued to burn brighter ever since. I currently conduct a multitude of health psychology research with a particular interest in behaviour change interventions. I am currently piloting a habit breaking intervention to increase physical activity, self-efficacy, emotional intelligence and creativity, and reduce sedentary habit strength'. A second intervention is being tested that uses positive visualisation and expressive writing in an attempt to improve female body esteem, self-efficacy for healthy eating and dietary cognitions/behaviour (e.g. emotional eating). I am trialling a third intervention exploring the most effective types of health messaging so that health information has a positive effect on attitudes and is recalled more accurately. This involves manipulating both the message content and the images presented alongside. Other projects are exploring the possible role that dogmatic/inflexible thinking may play as a barrier to changing unhealthy behaviours.



Now that Jim and others are championing the behavioural sciences to deliver approaches from health psychology to Hertfordshire residents, there seems to be a real opportunity going forward for collaborative work and to make real contributions to improve local and national health. I have decided to incorporate my research interests and this message into a PhD alongside my normal role on a part-time basis starting this year. The biggest challenge for me is still ahead. I have to narrow down my interests into a focused research question, while making sure that I adopt a unique approach with the potential of having a real impact or application for public health on the ground. This needs to be considered alongside the need to continue to publish regularly. This feels a bit overwhelming at times but it is a challenge I intend on embracing fully.

HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY IN ACTION

Health Psychology can help the complexities in tackling health inequalities and the key factors that contribute for example stress



THE NETWORK



Join our network

Our Network is growing and If you would like to join our network and receive information or events then please contact publichealth@hertfordshire.gov.uk



Up and coming workshops

We just had our workshop which focused around the behaviour of Smoking on the 28th May 2014. If you would like to come to the next event then please email publichealth@hertfordshire.gov.uk with your interest

OBESITY IN THE UK STATS

61.9%

Adults in the UK are overweight or obese (Department of Health, 2013)

28%

Children in the UK aged between 2 and 15 are overweight or obese (Department of Health, 2013)



"as a profession we can demonstrate that we can make a difference to health outcomes, which will prove advantageous to health services"

Dr Laura Elwell

Questions put to Dr Laura Elwell

Health Psychologist, NHS Birmingham Children's Hospital

Where do you see health psychology in 10 years time?

In ten years' time I would love to see Health Psychologist positions routinely advertised in the NHS. Through my own experiences I definitely think the NHS is becoming more interested in the skills that a Health Psychologist can offer, unique to other areas of psychology. I also think as a profession we can demonstrate that we can make a difference to health outcomes, which will prove advantageous to health services.

When were you interested in human behaviour?

I guess I've always been fascinated by human behaviour and trying to work out why people that appear so similar on the surface demonstrate different beliefs, behaviours and attitudes. So I think for me being a psychologist fits with my natural curiosity!

How did you find the stage 2 process?

I chose to undertake the University route to becoming a registered Health Psychologist alongside full time employment. Personally I found it really helpful working in NHS settings whilst undertaking my training as I could readily see how the competencies I was training in could benefit practice, even though it was at times challenging to manage stage 2 training and work

commitments. I also think that stage 2 training can be quite isolating if you are not in contact with other trainees. Therefore the University route is helpful in the sense that you are going through the process alongside other trainees who understand the demands of meeting competencies.

What skills do you think are needed to become a qualified Health Psychologist?

To become a Health Psychologist I think you need to have lots of determination and a passion for this area of psychology, as well as resilience. In terms of practical skills I think having a strong grounding in research is massively important, as we need to ensure that the interventions that we develop are based on evidence, and that we have the skills to assess their effectiveness. I also think it's essential to have strong communication skills. Communication skills are really important as many Health Psychologists work in teams, as well as have direct contact with service users.



Individual
Health
Understand
Use Community
Access
Literacy
Life Empowerment
Information



Health
Improving
Opportunities
Job
Helping
Employment
Broad
Global
Diverse
Availability
Challenging
Applications
Process
Program
Innovative
Support
Dynamic
Trend
Safety
Youth
Light
Change
Sustainable
Skills



"I felt the workshop offered very useful practical advice in terms of locating work opportunities to fulfil skills criteria. It was useful to hear of the varying applied experiences also in terms of either teaching and/or working in various areas of health promotion within the NHS as well as how the NHS is beginning to recognise Health Psychology in its own right. It was particularly useful to hear the practical advice in terms of study and work and making study as part of your work schedule and the need to prepare in advance. this workshop made me feel more confident in pursuing a career in health psychology and the path I would need to take was much clearer in terms of where to go and what 'types' of roles to look out for. I could also see the benefits of networking and talking to others of the same mind-set. Overall, very beneficial and very inspiring to hear how some very 'real people' did it and are still doing it- made it feel achievable and within my reach"

(MSc Health Psychology student, University of Bedfordshire).

TAKE PART IN OUR FUTURE NEWSLETTER

If you would like contribute or take part in our newsletter then please contact

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"The health psychology workshop was really good and it helped me understand some of the paths I can take. This is great time for peers in the field to come together and build an understanding between the network and public health"

(Delegate February 2014 workshop)

"I was very surprised by the turnout to this workshop and it gave me an understanding in to what health psychology can offer. The organisation of the workshop in March made me feel welcomed and the speakers made me feel very inspired"

(Delegate March 2014 workshop)

"The talk by both Dr Chater and Dr Cook were really helpful, it gave me an opportunity to think about my career and the routes available to stage 2"

(Delegate February 2014 workshop)

"I am not from a psychology background and have always found it interesting. Working in public, this discipline can really help my service and other public health services better. I believe this will take time and patience but with a group focused on bringing relationships between health psychology and public will serve the population more effective"

(Delegate March 2014 workshop)

"Me and my manager were invited to the workshop in March 2014 and thought the workshop was really useful to understand how health psychology can improve our team in the future"

(Delegate March 2014 Workshop)

"I am a PhD research student and was pleased by the quality of the workshop held in February 2014. It gave me valuable information about the stage 2 process. Which is difficult to understand sometimes just by reading articles. Therefore it was extremely helpful to speak at first hand to speakers who have been through the different routes. It was really interesting to hear what others think and give their views on this



new type of approach. After listening to others views, I realised I was not alone in my thoughts about this approach. However I do feel there are a lot of barriers which need to be overcome in order for this type of approach to come in affect in many aspects of public



health. I also think there needs to be a cultural change in public health as peers may not understand what healthy psychology can offer. However I do believe workshops like this is a step forward bridging the gap between health psychology and public health"

(Delegate March 2014)

THE BIO-PSYCHO-SOCIAL MODEL



Health psychology uses this model to help explain health behaviour

Building a Career in Health Psychology

by Dr Erica Cook,

Senior Lecturer in Health Psychology & Trainee

As a trainee health psychologist working with outside agencies such as NHS Obesity and Public Health services there continues to be a lack of understanding of what health psychology is, and more notably how this discipline differs to clinical psychology. Whilst I realise that this is not uncommon and certainly not restricted to my experience, perhaps not made easier by advertised NHS roles of 'clinical health psychologist' it does still bring challenges to the future employability of health psychologists. Whilst I do not want to discount the pivotal role of Clinical Psychology I believe that Health Psychologists are well placed to contribute to the public health arena (see Michie & Abraham, 2005).

Here is why.... firstly, health psychologists have acquired MSc level knowledge of health psychology alongside advanced research skills. They then (as I am now) are required to complete their stage 2 training, driven by the demonstration over a minimum of two years' experience five core competencies. These include conducting advanced level research to advance theoretical and methodological knowledge, developing and delivering evidenced based behaviour change interventions, providing consultancy and delivering skills unique to health psychologists to not only students but health professionals such as nurses, pharmacists and GP's.

I was therefore delighted to share my experiences of my stage 2 training (Independent route) as a trainee health psychologist at the East of England Health Psychology Regional Network Event organised by Hertfordshire County Council. This workshop, supported by both the Director for Public Health Jim McManus and Chair of the Division of Health Psychology, Professor Paul Bennett, highlights that not only is the discipline of Health Psychology becoming more widely known in the arena of public health but is being championed as a discipline that can really contribute to both the development of public health policy and practice within the UK. I personally believe that making these network links are fundamental to integrating health psychology in public health as well as

advancing the career paths of future health psychologists.

The future is bright...

WHAT IS PSYCHOLOGY-(BPS, 2014)



Psychology is the scientific study of human mind and behaviour: how we think, feel, act and interact individually and in groups.

Psychology is concerned with all aspects of behaviour and with the thoughts, feelings and motivations underlying that behaviour. It is both a thriving academic discipline and a vital professional practice.

We are all interested in what makes people tick and how this understanding can help solve major problems in society.

Psychology is a science and psychologists study human behaviour by observing, measuring and testing, then arriving at conclusions that are rooted in sound scientific methodology.

Applied or practising psychologists use the knowledge gained from this research in a wide range of settings. Applied psychologists help people with all sorts of problems, working with them to bring about change for the better.

The title of **Chartered Psychologist** is the benchmark of professional recognition, reflects the highest standard of psychological knowledge and expertise, and allows a psychologist to use the abbreviation CPsychol after their name.

WHAT IS HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY (BPS, 2014)



Health Psychology

Health psychologists use their knowledge of psychology and health to promote general well-being and understand physical illness. They are specially trained to help people deal with the psychological and emotional aspects of health and illness as well as supporting people who are chronically ill.

Health psychologists promote healthier lifestyles and try to find ways to encourage people to improve their health. For example, they may help people to lose weight or stop smoking. Health psychologists also use their skills to try to improve the healthcare system. For example, they may advise doctors about better ways to communicate with their patients

RESEARCH IN HEALTH



Research Goals

Research, evidence, and information are the foundation for sound health policies. WHO supports research for health within the following four goals.

- Capacity - build capacity to strengthen health research systems.
- Priorities - support the setting of research priorities that meet health needs particularly in low- and middle-income countries.
- Standards - develop an enabling environment for research through the creation of norms and standards for good research practice.
- Translation - ensure quality evidence is turned into affordable health technologies and evidence-informed policy