

## THE ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGISTS IN HEALTH PROMOTION AS SOCIAL PRACTICE



## Psychology

**KEYWORDS:** Macro-benthos, Bhayander, Naigaon, Shannon's Index, Margalef Index, Estuary.

**Dr. Rekha Baxy**

Prof. & Head Department of Psychology Govt. Auto. Girls P.G. College of Excellence Sagar (M.P.)

Advances in psychological, medical, and physiological research have led to a new way of thinking about health and illness. This is reflected in the biopsychosocial model that views health and illness as the product of a combination of factors including biological characteristics (e.g. genetic predisposition), behavioral factors, such as lifestyle, stress, health beliefs and social conditions like cultural influences, family relationships and social support). This conceptualization of health and illness has many scientific and practical benefits. At the top of this list is the fact that people can reduce their risk of developing major medical problems, receive more effective treatment, and reduce their health care cost when they seek treatment from an interdisciplinary team including behavioral health providers.

It is worth noticing here, that in the recent past, dealing with health and illness was based on the biomedical paradigm in which the biological aspects were the main focus of the scientist and practitioner. Good health was simply seen as the absence of diseases and injuries, and their presence meant ill health. The proper treatment for that model meant that there were biological interventions in order to improve the biological damage. As a result, health providers were divided into two groups, the physicians who followed the biomedical thinking and who had complete authority to deal with patients, and their assistants whose role it was to follow the physicians' orders.

At present, the understanding of the body-mind-behavior relationship has dramatically changed medical system and practice. This change, from the biomedical paradigm to the biopsychosocial medicine, characterizes the current holistic model of health provision.

Overall, the biopsychosocial model reflects the belief that biological, psychological, and social factors interact in an interdependent or systemic way to maintain health or cause illness. This approach has become universal, and has been endorsed and adopted by the World Health Organization.

Because behavior plays a vital role in mental and physical health, behavioral health is becoming the cornerstone of the biopsychosocial practice. The way behavior may positively or negatively affect the body by stating that lifestyles, life-events, and bad behavior are directly related to health and illness; the way we think about events determines our response to them in developing healthy or unhealthy behaviors and changes in behavior. Attitudes to health determine whether we hear or listen to advice from health professionals, and a person's personality may predispose the body to certain dysfunctions.

Psychology as the science of behavior and mental processes emphasizes training and knowledge about such aspects like development over the lifespan, learning, motivations, experiences, emotions, cognition, social behavior and attitudes, personality etc. Moreover, it strives to understand how biological, behavioral, and social factors influence health and illness.

Thus, psychologists as behavioral health providers play a major role in understanding how biological, behavioral, and social factors influence health, and illness. They are equipped with training, skills, and knowledge to understand how basic behavioral and cognitive processes, as cognition, emotion, motivation, development,

personality, social and cultural interaction prepare the body to develop dysfunctions. They are trained, on the other hand, to perceive how these behavioral and cognitive functions are altered, the factors that contribute to their alteration, and how these dysfunctions are diagnosed and treated. In dealing with such problems, they are also trained and skilled to use several psychological, psychodiagnostic and psychotherapeutic techniques which help and affect the abilities of individuals to function in diverse settings and roles. In addition, they help people to modify their behavior and lifestyle so as to prevent and recover from health problems.

Consequently, demands for psychologists in hospitals and medical settings have dramatically increased and clinical health psychology has become one of the most important disciplines in health care. In the following section, an overview of the main clinical specialties of psychology is given.

Clinical psychology is the application of psychological knowledge and skills, research and intervention techniques to health and illness, particularly as related to mental health.

The American Psychological Association defines clinical psychology as "a clinical discipline that involves the provision of diagnostic, assessment, treatment plan, treatment, prevention, and consultative services to patients of emergency room, inpatient units, and clinics of hospitals".

The development of Psychology as a health specialty and discipline has led to the emergence of several sub-fields and subspecialties. These sub-fields include clinical psychology, health psychology (also referred to as medical psychology or behavioral medicine), clinical neuropsychology, counseling psychology, rehabilitation psychology, community psychology, and pediatric psychology with subspecialties in each field.

Overall, the field of clinical psychology integrates science, theory and practice to understand, predict and alleviate maladjustment, disabilities, and discomfort as well as to promote human adaptation, adjustment, and personal development. It, therefore, focuses on the intellectual, emotional, biological, psychological, social, and behavioral aspects of human function in different cultures and at all socioeconomic levels.

Clinical psychology has several subspecialties such as child and adolescent psychology, clinical adult psychology, clinical geropsychology, clinical psychology of learning disabilities, clinical psychology of substance abuse and clinical forensic psychology.

Psychologists in hospitals and other health care facilities may work independently, or as a part of a team. First as clinical psychologists, they are mental health providers and usually render service through mental health units and psychiatric hospitals. Second, as health or medical psychologists, they are behavioral health providers and deal with the behavioral dimensions of the physical health and illness. They provide the clinical and health services to both inpatient and outpatient units as well as to patients who function independently and to those new patients who need evaluation. The American Board of Clinical Psychology as a training body states that the services provided by psychologists typically include: diagnosis and assessment, intervention and treatment, consultation with professionals and others, program development, supervision,

administration, psychological services and evaluation and planning of these services and teaching and research and contributing to the knowledge of all of these areas.

#### REFERENCES

1. Smith T, Nicassio P. Psychological practice: clinical application of the biopsychosocial model. In: Smith T, Nicassio P, editors. *Managing the chronic illness*. Washington: APA; 1995.
2. The World health report. Geneva: WHO; 2002. The World Health Organisation.
3. *Clinical Psychology*. Washington: APA; 2002. The American Psychological Association.
4. Davis K. Emphasizing strengths: counselling psychologists. In: Sernberg R, editor. *Career paths in psychology*. Washington: APA; 1997.
5. Iscoe I. Reaching out: community psychologists. In: Sernber R, editor. *Career paths in psychology*. Washington: APA; 1997.
6. Jonson S, Millstein S. Prevention opportunities in health care settings. *American Psychologist*. 2003;58:475-81. [PubMed]