

Role of Psychologist in Health Care

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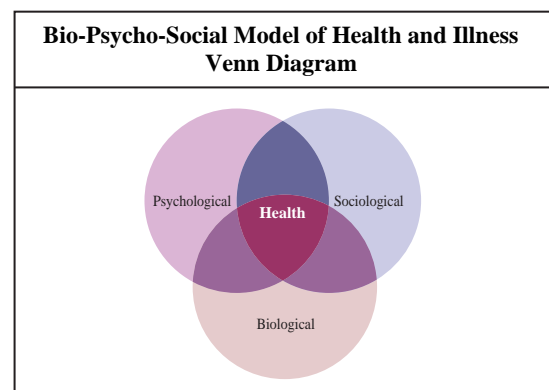
Abstract

Back ground: Recent advances in psychological, medical, and physiological research have led to a new way of thinking about health and illness. This conceptualization, which has been labeled the biopsychosocial model, views health and illness as the product of a combination of factors including biological characteristics (e.g., genetic predisposition), behavioral factors (e.g., lifestyle, stress, health beliefs), and social conditions (e.g., cultural influences, family relationships, social support). **Objectives:** Create awareness about psychological support, understanding behavioral and contextual factors, preventing illness.

Introduction

In the 1950s, psychology and medicine began to notice a new trend. Life expectancy was up because people were less likely to die of contagious diseases. However, medical problems due to lifestyle choices were on the rise. Obesity leading to heart disease and Type II diabetes. Smoking leading to heart disease and cancer. Stress leading to compromised immune system and cardiovascular disease. So, the biopsychosocial model was created. Providers now need to examine all aspects of a patient's life. The medical physicians treat the physical causes. It is the psychologist's job to identify the behavioral, affective, and social contributors to disease and medical problems. Does someone smoke because it is classically conditioned? Is hypertension caused by a stress job? Will someone's prognosis for cancer improve with coping skills, family therapy, and behavioral intervention? The psychologist then has to design interventions to address the behavioral, affective, and social issues that cause and maintain these diseases. Health Psychology is the study of psychological and behavioral processes in health, illness and healthcare. It is concerned with understanding how psychological, behavioral 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 (such as stress causing the release of hormones such as cortisol which damage the body over time) and indirectly via a person's own behavior choices which can harm or protect health (such as smoking or taking exercise). Psychologists take a biopsychosocial approach - this means that they understand health to be the product not only of biological processes (e.g. a virus, tumour, etc.) but also of psychological processes (e.g. stress, thoughts and beliefs, behaviors such as smoking and exercise) and social processes (e.g. socioeconomic status, culture and ethnicity). By understanding and harnessing psychological factors, psychologists can improve health by working directly with individual patients,



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The Work Setting of a Psychologist

Psychologists participate in health care in a multitude of settings including primary care programs, inpatient medical units, and specialized health care programs such as pain management, rehabilitation, women's health, oncology, smoking cessation, headache management, and various other programs. They also work in colleges and universities, corporations, and for governmental agencies.

Clinical Activities

Assessment approaches often include cognitive and behavioral assessment, psycho-physiological assessment, clinical interviews, demographic surveys, objective and projective personality assessment, and various other clinical and research-oriented protocols. Interventions often include stress management, relaxation therapies, biofeedback, psycho education about normal and patho-physiological processes, ways to cope with disease, and cognitive-behavioral and other psychotherapeutic interventions. Healthy people are taught preventive health behaviors. Both individual and group interventions are utilized. Frequently, psychology interventions focus upon buffering the effect of stress on health by promoting enhanced coping or improved social support utilization.

Psychologists are on the leading edge of research focusing on the biopsychosocial 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 (e.g., diabetes, cancer, hypertension and coronary artery disease, chronic pain, and sleep disorders). Research in psychology examines: the causes and development of illness, methods to help individuals develop healthy lifestyles to promote good health and prevent illness, the treatment people get for their medical problems,

the effectiveness with which people cope with and reduce stress and pain, biopsychosocial connections with immune functioning, and factors in the recovery, rehabilitation, and psychosocial adjustment of patients with serious health problems.

Working area for psychologist in health care

Psychologists provide mental and behavioral health services.

Psychologists focus on prevention; address health disparities; aim to reduce psychological distress; and enhance and promote psychological wellbeing in all populations. Many psychologists concentrate on underserved populations, such as older adults, children, the chronically ill (i.e., those with heart disease, cancer, diabetes), and victims of abuse and trauma,

Psychologists work with people of all ages who experience mental health disorders including depression and anxiety; serious and enduring mental illness (e.g., bipolar disorder, schizophrenia); neurological disorders (e.g., Alzheimer's disease); adjustment to physical illnesses (e.g., heart disease, diabetes); addictive behaviors (e.g., substance abuse); eating disorders; behavior disorders (e.g., Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder - ADHD); personal and family relationship problems; and learning disabilities.

Psychologists assist in the diagnosis and treatment of patients with chronic illnesses. They utilize interventions such as psychotherapy, behavioral techniques, and biofeedback to help individuals make behavioral changes (e.g., medication compliance, diet, exercise) and develop coping strategies (e.g., chronic pain management) to reduce problems that are residual to the patient's illness or disorder (e.g., cardiovascular disease). They also teach patients the skills necessary to enhance physician/patient partnership by reporting changes in their

Role of Psychologist in Health Care

condition and sharing concerns, questions, and treatment preferences.

End of life care

This care is for attendants to cope with trauma. When a patient become very sick and near to death, at that time.

- End-of-life care provides physical, mental, and emotional comfort, as well as social support, to people who are living with and dying of advanced illness.

- People who have already discussed their wishes for end-of-life care with their loved ones feel less stress at the end of their life, and so do their families.

Psychological support for long standing patient

Sometimes this kind of patient becomes depressed and hopeless about recovery. They have lost their interest about life which is linked to delayed physical recovery. In this situation they can reject to take treatment and maintain rules. Psychologist can help them to boost up their mind and increase hope for life.

Psychological support for ICU patients

The environment of ICU is totally different than other ward. There we see frequent death or severe condition of every patient. Every patient is being monitored by critical machine or equipments. For patient safety they are isolated from attendants and they can meet at only fixed times. In this circumstances patient becomes depressed and feelings of irritation can arise. Some patient can develop PTSD, stress and negative emotions may have both immediate, as well as long-term effects on ICU patients' psychological and physical well-being, and they are linked to delayed physical recovery. Psychologist can help this kind of patient to make them understand and cope with present condition. ICU nurses need to engage in psychological support in a systematic way, and to acknowledge the high priority of support interventions.

Psychological support before-after surgery

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.

Rejection of treatment

Sometimes patients reject their treatment procedure. Most of the time hopelessness about life increases possibilities of rejection. Conflict with family members, frustration in life, and no aim for living, incapability can increase possibilities of rejection. Psychologist can help to improve this situation in positive way.

Disclosing critical diagnosis and poor prognosis:

In this area psychologist can help to disclose and make patient cope.

Typical activities of psychologists working in health centers

- Assessing and diagnosing an individual's needs, abilities or behavior using a variety of methods, including psychometric tests, interviews and direct observation of behavior.

- Collaborating as part of an interdisciplinary team, working alongside other health professionals (e.g., physicians, nurses, social workers, occupational therapists, pharmacists and dentists).

- Creating and monitoring appropriate programs of treatment, including therapy, in collaboration with other involved health professionals.

- Offering therapy for difficulties relating to

anxiety, depression, addictions, social/ interpersonal problems, and risky behaviors.

- Rehabilitating patients into the community.
- Developing and evaluating programs for the provision of mental & behavioral health services.
- Providing consultation to other health professionals and other involved staff.

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