

Content of the e-courses

“Illness and treatment perceptions: the role of idiosyncratic beliefs for health outcomes”

Facilitator: Dr. Maria João Figueiras (Piaget Institute, Portugal)

Date: March 30th 2015, 11am-12:30 CET

Description:

The self-regulation model emphasizes the role of common-sense representations of illness and how these representations influence the processing and management of health threat situations. By integrating information shared in society, provided by external sources, and derived from personal experiences, individuals form their own cognitive and emotional representations of the disease, which guide the way they make sense of and cope with the illness. Illness perceptions have been widely studied. The several dimensions into which they seem to be organized have been identified and related to coping and adjustment to several chronic illnesses, including CHD.

Additionally, psychological research has shown that patients have a more active role in decisions about their treatment and these perceptions do not develop in isolation and are related to the patient' models of illness, as well as the effect of the treatment relative to their expectations. Research on beliefs about CHD has also revealed that some specific cognitions frequently held by patients are detrimental for cardiac health and were associated with worse indicators of recovery. Moreover, there has not been much discussion around how cardiac misconceptions relate to and differentiate themselves from other belief dimensions, such as illness perceptions and causal attributions. This session wants to stimulate a discussion about possible links between illness perceptions (including misconceptions), and perceptions of treatment and its impact on health outcomes in patients and in the community.

“What is “habit”, and how can it be used to understand and change behaviour?”

Facilitator: Dr. Benjamin Gardner (King's College London, UK)

Dates: April 22nd and 29th 2015, 2pm-3:30pm CET

Description:

Broadly speaking, 'habit' refers to a phenomenon whereby behaviour is prompted automatically by situational cues, as a result of learned cue-behaviour associations. Habit has attracted considerable interest in recent years, because of its hypothesized implications for behaviour change: forming a new habit may shield new health behaviours against losses in motivation over time, and disrupting unwanted habits may require more than simply changing intentions. This two-session e-course offers a state-of-the-art overview of the habit concept and how it can be used to predict, understand, and change health behaviour. The first of the two sessions introduces the habit concept, discusses how habit forms and how it affects behaviour, and critically appraises the coherence of existing definitions. A novel definition is offered that achieves a conceptual separation between habit and behaviour. The second

session looks at on using habit to change behaviour, with an especial focus on adding a habit formation component to interventions seeking to increase uptake of healthy behaviours.