

Annual Report - Switzerland

Jan Willem Nieuwenboom

University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland

National Associations

The Swiss Society for Health Psychology (Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Gesundheitspsychologie SGGPsy / Société Suisse de Psychologie de la Santé SSPsS) is member of the Federation of Swiss Psychologists (FSP). Its main goal is the promotion of Health Psychology as an independent discipline of psychology in Switzerland. It was founded on April 19th, 1997 in Fribourg. Membership requires a university degree in Psychology and practical experience of at least two years in the field of Health Psychology.

As part of the strategy to establish Health Psychology as a separate discipline, the Swiss Society cooperates with other organizations and disciplines in similar fields e.g., Public Health Switzerland http://www.public-health.ch/logicio/pmws/publichealth__home__de.html and Mental Health Network Switzerland <http://www.npg-rsp.ch/de/metanav/english.html>.

The Swiss Society for Health Psychology is currently headquartered at:

University of Applied Sciences and Arts
Northwestern Switzerland
School of Social Work, Institute of Social Work and Health
Riggenbachstrasse 16
CH-4600 Olten
Tel.: 062 957 21 36
E-mail: holger.schmid@fhnw.ch
Link to webpage:
<http://www.healthpsychology.ch/>

Education, training and professionalization

There are at least four universities in Switzerland where health psychology is being taught, namely at the universities of Zurich, Lausanne, Geneva and Fribourg. A Master Degree in health psychology (MSc) can be obtained in these universities. A postgraduate curriculum exists in order to attain the professional degree as Health Psychologist recognized by the FSP. With the new federal law on psychology (PsyG) that came into effect by April, 2013, Health Psychology is mentioned in the law as a practical specialization of Psychology in the health system comparable with Psychotherapy and quality standards for a continued formation that should lead to a federally recognized title of "Health Psychologist" were stipulated. Three universities in the French-speaking part of Switzerland have jointly developed a continued formation programme (Master of Advanced Studies MAS) that meets the quality standards. These standards were defined in a cooperative process in which the federal government, the universities, the professional organizations FSP and SGGPsy and the accreditation commission were involved.

Journals

There is no Swiss journal of health psychology yet, but Swiss health psychologists publish in a variety of scientific journals. The Swiss Society for Health Psychology distributes a newsletter at least twice a year.

Other

In Switzerland, Health Psychologists are active in various settings; hospitals (e.g. tobacco prevention), research (at universities and universities of applied sciences) and in the field of networking. One important network, for instance, is the Mental Health Network Switzerland (Netzwerk Psychische Gesundheit/ Réseau Santé Psychique Suisse) which was initiated by the Swiss Federal Government and encompasses three Ministries as well as a health promotion foundation and the GDK/CDS (i.e. the committee of health ministers of the cantons). This network is coordinated by the health psychologist Alfred Künzler: <http://www.npg-rsp.ch/>. The Swiss Society for Health Psychology is also consulted in decision making processes with regard to governmental strategies and law-making on relevant fields.

Year 2014-2015

Associations

By autumn 2015, the Swiss Society for Health Psychology counted 74 full members, 19 of whom have the professional degree as Health Psychologist FSP. Note: this title has not to be mixed up with the new federally recognized title mentioned above.

Academic development

A Master of Advanced Studies (MAS) in Health Psychology (90 ECTS credits) has been created as a postgraduate education for psychologists by the "Triangle Azur", a network allowing cooperation between three universities in the French-speaking part of Switzerland (Geneva, Lausanne and Fribourg).

Its curriculum consists of three Courses of Advanced Studies (CAS) each with a total of 30 ECTS credits, a specific education in practice, theories and methods (10 credits), a master thesis consisting of a research paper or an intervention report (16 credits), supervision (4 credits) and an internship (or proof of thorough practice in intervention or research) (30 credits). It fulfills the federal quality standards. A recognition as a specialization comparable to psychotherapy is foreseen by the Swiss confederation according to the law on the protection of the profession of psychology. See for more information <http://mas-psychosante.ch>. The first course is due to start by January 2016.

Current research

In 2015, there was a wide range of research in Switzerland in which health psychologists were involved or which cover fields of Health Psychology.

Conferences

In August 2014, the Swiss Public Health Conference was held in Olten on the topic of Mental Health. It was a cooperation between the School of Social Work of the University of Applied Sciences and Arts in Olten, Public Health Switzerland and the Mental Health Network Switzerland (see also below). Although this was not a Health Psychology conference per se, Health Psychologists played an important role as they organized the conference and took part in the presentations and workshops: http://sph14.organizers-congress.ch/index_de.php.

Wim Nieuwenboom was elected unanimously as new National Delegate of the EHPS. He represented us at the last EHPS-Conference in Limmasol.

The fourth network conference of the Mental Health Network Switzerland took place on August 2015 and health psychologists were involved in it.

Other activities

The Swiss Society for Health Psychology has been asked to give its opinion with respect to a variety of governmental strategy papers and hearings. For instance, we were consulted in a hearing with respect to a draft paper on mental health (20.11.2014) and took a position with respect to conceptual ambiguities and the derivation of options for action. Second, we were involved in the National Addiction Strategy (May 2015). Here, we criticized an approach that is too medical and proposed one that focuses more on the psychological and social determinants of health. Third, members of the board of the SGGPsy were also involved in a consultation about the National Strategy on Non-communicable Diseases in September 2015. Alongside conceptual improvements, an approach that does not exclusively focus on the individual but appropriately takes into account the contextual (social and economic) framework in which health behaviors occur was proposed.



Jan Willem Nieuwenboom

University of Applied Sciences and
Arts Northwestern Switzerland
FHNW

wim.nieuwenboom@fhnw.ch