

Editorial

Angela Rodrigues

Northumbria University

Pamela Rackow

University of Stirling

Introduction

Health psychologists can make an important contribution to the practice of public health at different levels. Firstly, health psychologists can provide theoretical ground for the understanding of health and illness and its determinants; and they can theoretical models for understanding health-related behaviour. Secondly, health psychology can also provide the necessary knowledge base about health behaviours that can guide the development of behaviour change interventions. Finally, health psychologists can also support public health research by using methodological approaches that complement epidemiological methods, including theory test, statistics widely used in psychology (i.e. multivariate analysis techniques), and the use of assessment tools.

The goals of this special issue are to provide examples of health psychology contributions across: 1) health improvement, health protection and commissioning of services to improve health and well-being; 2) design, implementation and evaluation of services, working collaboratively across the local public health system and with local communities; 3) design and delivery of targeted public health campaigns; and 4) evidence-based recommendations for change and public policy development.

This special issue focuses on health psychology in public health settings. The articles provide an overview of how health psychology is influencing public policy in EHPS members' countries. Articles also reflect on how members have brought forward

their areas of concern and had them adopted as a policy priorities, championing the synergy of health psychology and public health.

Overview of the special issue

The contents of this special issue include: the design and evaluation of theory-based intervention in public health; working with health care professionals to design and implement changes in practice; the introduction of health psychology into multidisciplinary public health teams; and practicing health psychology. A brief overview of the papers included in this special issue can be found below.

We start this special issue with an article written by Andrew Steptoe where he describes the improvements in this specific area during the last 14 years, since he and colleague and his late wife Jane Wardle wrote an article about "Public Health Psychology" in the British Psychological Society magazine "The Psychologist" in 2005. He emphasises the need for collaboration with other health professionals and with public health policy makers. The partnership with police makers and other stakeholders within public health is a key aspect highlighted throughout the papers in this special issue.

Calan et al. describe the development of the Choosing Healthy Eating for Infant Health (CHERIsH) intervention, a multi-disciplinary, cross-institutional infant feeding intervention to support and promote healthy infant feeding practices among parents and primary caregivers. This intervention has been developed using practitioners

and public health policy stakeholder involvement engagement action. The partnership with a primary care provider shaped the development as well as the use of theory and evidence base. The authors conclude that the ongoing engagement with practice and policy has contributed to success of the program and they reflect on lessons learnt and how this approach can inform future activities.

Levy et al. describe how they developed and tested a theory-based intervention to improve the quality of life for patients diagnosed with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease within a public health service in the UK. Through the lens of social identity theory, they provide some balanced reflections on the utility of the social identity approach to inform public health interventions. The authors discuss challenges that have occurred that were due to using this particular theoretical approach as well as due to the patient group.

McGregor and von Wagner write about their experiences in recruiting general practitioners into their trial which tested several interventions to improve the uptake of bowel cancer screening. It was planned that interventions would be delivered through primary care and different options for involving GP-practices were incorporated. The authors describe the different ways how they approached GP practices, their recruitment strategy and overall experience. In their conclusion the authors open up the space for other researchers to share their experience and to learn from each other.

In their article, Amorim et al. describe the scope and the aims of the the P5 Digital Medical Center (ACMP5) at the School of Medicine of University of Minho (Portugal). The P5 Digital Medical Center is a platform that offers a sustained environment for behaviour change and for health monitoring and promotion. In this centre, psychologists work as health coaches alongside other professionals to make sure that the benefits of using digital technology in healthcare can be utilized.

Rodrigues et al. describe the pragmatic

formative evaluation process of the LiveWell Dorset service. As part of the service health coaches support individuals to change several health behaviours by matching and prioritising individual specific barriers to appropriate interventions. The authors conclude that using a pragmatic formative evaluation approach is an excellent approach to meet the time and financial constraints under which public health services need to work and, at the same time, perform a sound evaluation with results that can inform practice.

Lucy Porter writes about her experience in working first as an intern and then as a member of staff at Public Health England. The author describes where difference between the work circumstances of academics and practitioners are, one being the very different timeframes. Lucy Porter concludes that there is still a big scope for further translation of approaches between academia, policy and practice. Only when those three parties work together closely, innovation and improvement can happen.



Angela Rodrigues

Department of Psychology,
Northumbria University

angela.rodrigues@northumbria.ac.uk



Pamela Rackow

Faculty of Natural Sciences,
University of Stirling

pamela.rackow@stir.ac.uk