Original Article

Chartering New Territories In Practical Health Psychology

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Introduction

Health Psychology plays a key role in developing and disseminating evidence, theories and methods that contribute to our understanding of health behaviour change. However, translation of this evidence into improved care for patients and the public is often lagging behind (Grol, 2001). The Practical Health Psychology (PHP) blog (www.practicalhealthpsychology.com) is an initiative affiliated with the European Health Psychology Society (EHPS), which recognises the need for mobilising the wealth of knowledge in our fields, and making that knowledge accessible to practitioners who work at the front line to implement evidence into practice. During the 2021 EHPS Conference the PHP blog convened a Lab Series entitled *'Chartering New Territories In Practical Health Psychology'* to enable an interactive discussion on how to make Health Psychology more practical and increase the real-life impact of our discipline (Screenshot 1). In this article we report on the activities and outcomes of the Lab Series, including an introduction to the PHP blog, reflections from National Editors, and top tips for translating research into practice.

Disseminating practical health psychology

Each month the PHP blog translates short blog posts based on peer-reviewed research and expert opinions into 28 languages, and utilises a network of National Editors and a coordinated social networking strategy to ensure broad reach of these posts (by now, to 41 countries). In the last year alone, our website has had 106,633 site visits, which is a 73% increase from the previous year. This year we published a free online book: https://practicalhealthpsychology.com/e-book/ which has been downloaded more than 4,900 times (as of March 2022). This free e-book, *Practical Health Psychology* Volume 1, contains all posts published by the blog since its inception through till the end of 2020 (32 posts in total and introduction written by the Lead Editors). We hope that it will make the contents of the blog even more accessible for readers and help open another channel of dissemination. Our Media Team (Urszula Ambrozy, and Rebecca Amy Nourse) aims to maximise reach of our blog by disseminating each post via Facebook (@practhealthpsy; 545 followers), Twitter (@PractHealthPsyc; 1319 followers), Instagram (@practicalhealthpsychology; 197 followers), and LinkedIn (https://www.linkedin.com/company/practical-health-psychology-blog).

Why language matters

At the heart of the PHP blog are our 53 National Editors representing 41 countries, who work to ensure that blog posts are translated into 28 languages. For each language, one or more National Editors are in charge of the translation and dissemination of the blog posts. In this process, many lessons are taught and learned, ranging from process-optimising to dealing with cultural sensitivities. During these lab-series, three National Editors shared their vision and experiences:

Jiyoung Park (South Korea)

As a PHP Korean national editor, every month translating a blog post is not an easy task in my busy daily life. However, this is such a valuable opportunity and experience for me, and I want to share it. When I receive a blog post, I first check whether it is a familiar issue for me or not, because I thought that without sufficient prior knowledge, high quality interpretation is impossible. And then, I translate blog contents line by line. Next, I send this material to another Korean National Editor to check the content and psychological terms. Given that Health Psychology is not well advanced in South Korea I had to identify potential readers of the PHP blog. After much research I managed to connect with the Korean Health Psychological Association (KHPA) who agreed to start a special newsletter for the blog. The role of PHP National Editor requires more time and effort than I expected, especially in the translation process, but the learning and gain in this process is really worth it for me. Also, you can easily get support from other PHP Editors. Therefore, I would like to say to those who are hesitant to participate in our team, let's do it together! If you have a passion for PHP, then it is worth engaging in it!

Anne van Dongen (Netherlands)

Translating the blog has been a great way for me to keep up my 'Health Psychology Dutch' while living abroad for six years. I think the blog is such a great initiative because as researchers sometimes we get caught up in doing good and interesting research that we forget non-researchers may not understand. This blog is a great way to translate our research to everyday healthcare practice. I love to read the blogs myself, including the links to relevant literature, and I have used them in preparing lectures or when I need to know something general about a topic I am not too familiar with. Translating from English to Dutch, I don't come across the massive barriers that my fellow National Editors come across as we share the same script and direction of writing. However, it is more difficult than I initially thought as sentence structure is different, and some English words, like 'self-efficacy', do not have a proper translation into Dutch. I use a translation website and have started a PHP dictionary with common word translations. I always tweet and facebook the new blog, and mention it in any guest lectures for, e.g., nurses. I always use it in informal talks with practitioners when they show interest in Health Psychology in general or in a specific topic.

Noa Vilchinsky (Israel)

In Israel, the main challenge is to adapt the content of each blog post to the Israeli culture and the Hebrew language. We encountered the technical necessity to always keep remembering to indent the text to the right, since Hebrew is written from right to left. Another challenge emerges from the fact that Israel is composed of a Hebrew-speaking majority but also a large minority of citizens who speak Arabic. To make the posts enticing for the Arab readers as well, we are in

need of an additional layer of translation- to the Arabic language. To cope with the load of translations, and make it an educational experience, the Hebrew translation is done by all the members of the PSYCHO-CARDIOLOGY RESEARCH at LAB-Bar Ilan University under my supervision- the local Hebrew Editor. This way, the students get the opportunity to contribute to this important international project and at the same time to broaden their knowledge of practical Health Psychology. The lab manager and the head editor review and finalise the drafts, and only then they are sent to the main PHP editorial center. We have found this process to be efficient, feasible, and valuable.

Top tips when translating research into practice

Sitting snugly in the ivory tower, it's hard to forget how similar its inhabitants are. One's colleagues often work in a similar field, speaking in the same scientific language. However, when working with colleagues who studied in different fields or have different technical or practical backgrounds, many communication-related challenges may emerge. This refreshing change also comes with a series of challenges. In this brief contribution, five tips were discussed that aim to help address these challenges: five tips that, not surprisingly, also resurface in the recommendations for writing the PHP blog posts.

First, "take your neighbour seriously". This refers to the need to communicate without relying on shared mental models. This means that not only will people not know specific theories, but they may not even know the concept of theories, or be familiar with other things we take so for granted that we don't realise how they form core elements of our vocabulary.

Second, "don't leave your academic integrity at the door of the ivory tower": even when interacting

with the general public (perhaps even especially then), you're responsible for carefully representing the state of the art. This means that given that you cannot rely on shared mental models, it is especially important to clearly articulate boundary conditions, weaknesses, and limitations. While academics often spot these habitually, this will not be the case of people outside the ivory tower.

Third, "everything should be as simple as possible, but not simpler": simplify your message as much as possible, but within the constraints set by the preceding principle. This means that while the absence of the ability to rely on a shared vocabulary may tempt you to "dumb down" your messages, leaving out the things that are harder to convey, this approach has its own risks. Empowering people with grossly simplified messages runs the risk of inadvertently equipping them with a hammer that will make everything look like a nail to them

Fourth, "less is less but more is too much": you have to accept that your communications can cover less ground than you're used to. This follows more or less necessarily from the previous three tips. Given that most concepts, including relatively basic concepts, will have to be explained, and there is only so much that can be omitted or simplified while still communicating accurately, you have to get used to being able to convey less in your translations to practice.

Fifth, "actions speak louder than words": it is important to provide specific, actionable recommendations. This is important for two reasons. First, clear recommendations provide concrete examples of your messages and what they imply, scaffolding those onto practice. Second, sometimes your audience will just want to know what to do, not caring much about the why. By making sure you always clearly communicate recommendations, you also reach that more action-oriented segment.

These tips and the related challenges were presented at the hand of the case of Party Panel, a

Dutch annual semi-panel determinant study where the determinants of five nightlife-related risk behaviors were discussed. Despite the hopes to present the resulting determinant structures to the practitioners responsible for the development of behavior change interventions, it turned out that the target audience could not work with the CIBER plots representing these structures (Peters, & Crutzen, 2018). In response a series of brief animations was developed (available at https://partypanel.nl/youtube-playlist). These brief movies illustrate the discussed principles: for example, of the entire determinant structure, only a few intervention suggestions could be recommended.

Interactive discussion

During our interactive discussion, attendees used the online platform Flinga to contribute new ideas for increasing the reach and impact of the PHP blog. Some attendees suggested ways to increase engagement between authors and readers, including adding a picture of the author to the top of each new post and having authors make themselves available for interviews or Q&A sessions after their posts appear online, e.g., via Twitter. This might also be expanded to have short podcasts covering each post, or perhaps a YouTube channel in which authors could use short videos to further engage audiences with their blog post topics. Another suggestion was to increase the number of languages into which the blog is translated and, specifically, to add an Arabic language. Attendees also suggested that more could be done to increase involvement of healthcare professionals in the blog, perhaps by getting ideas for blog topics from them or by involving their patients or service users in sharing their experiences of Health Psychology in practice. Education was another area for potential growth and impact, with some suggesting that each blog post could be accompanied by a few slides that could be used for teaching students or

healthcare professionals. Finally, attendees suggested that the blog's impact could be increased by strengthening links with existing national and international societies and networks, perhaps by using LinkedIn, national newspapers or other publications. The full results of this exercise can be viewed at https://edu.flinga.fi/s/EA8N37N.

The Practical Health Psychology Blog team has ambitious plans to progress the initiative in the coming years. We will be working collaboratively with our National Editors and with our Media Team to maintain and increase the engagement and involvement with healthcare practitioners around the world encouraging them to apply Health Psychology findings into practice.

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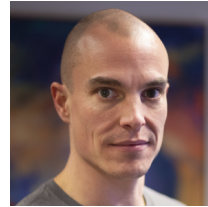
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Screenshot 1