

announcement

Principles of Behaviour Change in Health and Illness

What to expect from the upcoming EHPS conference

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This year, the annual EHPS conference will take place in the beautiful island of Cyprus (the island of love and beauty). The conference theme is "Principles of Behaviour Change in Health and Illness." Until recently, behavior change in the field of health psychology emphasized the exploration of theoretical models to explain health and illness and the investigation of empirically supported interventions for changing unhealthy or maladaptive behavioral patterns. Though great knowledge has been gained by these contributions, it has become increasingly important to not only investigate the effectiveness or efficacy of interventions, but also to explore the principles that contribute to behavior change. Gordon Paul (1967) posed an iconic question when referring to the importance of individualization in psychotherapy, asking: "What treatment, by whom, is most effective for this individual with that specific problem, and under which set of circumstances?" This question is still relevant when considering interventions aiming to change any behavior and especially health-related behaviors at the individual, the family, or the societal level. We hope to move the field forward by expanding on the question posed so many years ago by Paul and answering a slight variation of his question: which principles, under which set of circumstances, and for which specific individuals, considering their individual differences and needs,

are most relevant when designing interventions for health behavior change. The aim is to move in the direction of empirically supported principles to guide the field and the conference theme was chosen to reflect this interest.

Preparations for the conference are underway and the program has already started to take shape. We are very excited to host four exceptional keynote speakers. The Distinguished Professor of Psychology from the University of California, Riverside, Howard Friedman, will open the conference keynotes (Wednesday, September 2nd) with his talk on "Pathways to Health and Longevity." Prof. Friedman

believes that "it is not random who enters and sustains healthy pathways" and he will explore the astounding variability found in individuals' susceptibility to illness and the speed and likelihood of recovery.

On Thursday (September 3rd), we will have the pleasure of hearing a pioneer of our EHPS association, Professor of Clinical

and Health Psychology at the University College London, Susan Michie. Prof. Michie, will present on "Building the science of behavior change." She is a big proponent of the empirical evaluation of behavior change interventions and aims to understand, develop, evaluate and improve behavioural interventions by exploring their component techniques and causal mechanisms.

The next keynote speaker (Friday, September 4th) will be Professor JoAnne Dahl, from the University of Uppsala in Sweden. Prof. Dahl's talk promises to challenge our notions of health and illness behavior



change interventions and is titled "You are always 'greater than' your symptoms: Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and Behavioral Medicine." Recently acceptance and mindfulness-based approaches have received considerable interest by both the research and applied communities. Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) has achieved the status of an empirically supported intervention (American Psychological Association) for various problems, particularly for chronic pain. Dr. Dahl's work was pivotal in ACT gaining this prestigious status.

The final keynote presentation (Saturday, September 5th) will be delivered by Professor Ronan O'Carroll of Stirling University in the United Kingdom. His keynote talk will address the topic of "Health psychology and organ donation." His research focuses on exploring strategies to increase donor registration for organ transplantation and on prediction of outcome following medical and surgical interventions.

In addition to the keynote addresses, the conference this year will showcase a new type of presentation, titled "Overview talk." These will be 30-minute talks that provide an extended presentation of a topic, a theory, or an innovative line of research. The Scientific Committee will consider overview talks that are of interest to a wide audience. Individuals who wish to compete for these special overview talks should submit a 300-word abstract accompanied by a short statement justifying an extended talk by January 12th to the Chair of the Scientific Committee (Yael Benyamini, benyael@post.tau.ac.il). These submissions will be judged by the Scientific Committee by the end of January (to allow submission of a regular presentation if not accepted).

Another innovation this year is that in addition to regular posters being presented, the scientific committee has decided to include three special

sections of posters themed "Lessons learned," "Work in progress," and "Hands-on interventions." Since, very often, problems in research tend to be very informative, the "Lessons learned" posters will be devoted to discussing lessons learned from problems and pitfalls in specific research projects. The "Work in progress" posters allow researchers to present and share work in progress. Although these posters do not require data collection to be completed, the work still has to be of demonstrably good scientific quality to be accepted. The "Hands-on interventions" will allow for presentation of interventions and intervention material, if possible in terms of the facilities and equipment needed and linguistic barriers.

As in previous years, the conference program will be rich in various sessions, including oral presentations, symposia, roundtable discussions, debates, and participatory sessions. Oral presentations typically describe original empirical research or meta-analyses and reviews. Symposia (consisting of five oral presentations or 4 oral presentations and a discussant) provide an opportunity for focused presentations of a particular topic. A roundtable or debate provides an opportunity to take forward an issue of relevance to health psychology by critiquing current evidence

and suggesting future directions for research and applications. Finally, workshops (half or full day) will take place on Tuesday (September 1) before the official opening of the conference. A workshop provides an opportunity for a group of participants to achieve a specific goal or address a particular problem. It may be designed to train or educate participants in a particular research methodology or theoretical approach, or to address a specific problem, such as how to use particular research findings in health care or policy. A workshop can also be a useful way to develop a consensus on a particular issue. For example, the goal of the workshop may be to produce



a position statement or policy on a particular topic, to identify priorities in a specific area or to develop theoretical perspectives or methodologies. It should have a clear structure and require active participation by everyone involved.

Abstract submission has opened (visit the conference website at www.ehps2015.org) and will close on February 14th 2015. In addition to the scientific program, the venue and social programme promises to make this a successful scientific event that will provide many opportunities for both academic and social connections. As promised during our presentation at EHPS2014, Cyprus can offer exciting opportunities to combine intellectual stimulation with pleasure for both individuals and families. Apart from an innovative social program (e.g. beach party, yoga on the beach etc.), Limassol can offer a fulfilling outlet for all tastes and preferences (e.g. historical, cultural, night life, outdoor activities). We encourage you to submit your work and are looking forward to seeing you in Cyprus in September!

