

From the EHPS Journals

Psychology & Health: Current Trends

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Interest in the study and application of psychological approaches to health and illness continues to grow. The last twenty years have witnessed the development of health psychology as a major area of scientific enquiry and this has been reflected in the increasing number of journals devoted to publishing research and theory on the role of psychological factors in health and illness. *Psychology & Health* has established itself as one of the leading journals in the area, with a reputation for publishing high quality theoretical and empirical work as well providing a forum for new/critical approaches to psychology and health. The year sees the publication of the 20th volume of *Psychology & Health*. Since its inception in 1987, the journal has grown in terms of the number of issues, pages, submissions and impact factor. Over this time, the journal has also seen three Editors (John Weinman, Ad Kaptain and Paul Norman) and a new Editor is due to be appointed from 2007. *Psychology & Health* is the official journal of the *European Health Psychology Society*.

Psychology & Health publishes work on the full range of issues pertaining to the role of psychological factors in health and illness, including psychological aspects of the aetiology, experience and treatment of physical illness, health attitudes and behaviour, the interface between individuals and health care systems, and psychologically-based interventions. However, its main areas of strength currently reside in two areas - illness perceptions and social cognition models of health behaviour - as evidenced by citation counts and the number of papers downloaded from the *Psychology & Health* website.

Considering work in the first area, the journal has been at the forefront of work on illness representations. In particular, Weinman et al.'s (1996) paper which reported the development of the Illness Perception Questionnaire (IPQ) is widely regarded as a "citation-classic" ($n = 163$) and has had a major impact on the field. The development of the IPQ provided the catalyst for numerous studies on illness representations and adaptation to illness, many of which have been published in the journal. This work has been expertly summarised in a recent meta-analysis of the common-sense model of illness representations conducted by Hagger and Orbell (2003) (which was the second most frequently downloaded *Psychology & Health* paper in 2004). A revised version of the IPQ has been published in the journal (Moss-Morris et al., 2002) - it is the most highly cited paper of recent years and was the fourth most frequently downloaded paper in 2004. In addition, ongoing work is being conducted on a brief version of the IPQ. Such developments in the measurement of illness representations are likely to stimulate further research in this area.

Considering work in the second area, the journal has a strong reputation for publishing both empirical research and theoretical papers on social cognition models and health behaviour. This work was consolidated by the publication of two special issues in 1998 on *Social Cognition Models in Health Psychology* (edited by Mark Conner & Paul Norman) and *Self-Regulation and Health* (edited by Charles Abraham & Marie Johnston) that have had a major influence on subsequent research in the field. The journal continues to publish work on the application of social cognition models, such as the theory of planned behaviour, to the prediction of health behaviour. However, recent attention has been directed to the use of these models to inform the development of theory-based interventions to change health behaviour. An influential paper in this respect

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Past and current Editors of *Psychology & Health*

surrounding the use of social cognition models in intervention design have been discussed in more detail by Michie and Abraham (2004) (which was the most frequently downloaded paper in 2004). It is likely that this work will stimulate further tests of theory-based interventions to change health behaviour.

Two other areas of work published in the journal should be highlighted. First, the journal has a long tradition of publishing work on coping and illness. For example, a special issue of the journal on *Coping and Physical Health* (edited by Carolyn Aldwin and Crystal Park) was published in 2004, and a couple of the most frequently downloaded papers in 2004 focused on coping and adaptation to illness. Second, a growing number of papers have been published in the journal that have used qualitative methods to investigate psychological aspects of health and illness. Much of this work has been influenced by Smith's (1996) seminal paper on Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which has been highly cited ($n = 76$). The use of IPA in health psychology has been critically evaluated in a systematic review conducted by Brocki and Wearden (2006) which will appear in the journal next year.

It is likely that the journal will continue to publish work in its main areas of strength, although the journal welcomes submissions from all areas of health psychology (the primary criterion for publication in *Psychology & Health* being the quality of the work submitted, as assessed by peer review). Encouragingly, the journal's main areas of strength are well represented by European authors who have been at the forefront of many recent developments. Nonetheless, the journal is international in nature and, in particular, has attracted increasing interest over recent years from researchers based in North America. The current editorial team will seek to further strengthen the journal's position in the field, providing an outlet for work that reflects the strength and vitality of contemporary health psychology in Europe and beyond.

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is the systematic review conducted by Hardeman et al. (2002) on the use of the theory of planned behaviour in behaviour change interventions - one of the most frequently cited papers of recent years ($n = 35$) and the third most frequently downloaded paper in 2004. Various issues