

EUROPEAN HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY SOCIETY
EMAIL NEWSLETTER – JUNE 2001

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1. PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear EHPS Colleagues,

Vacationing may be good for your health (Gump & Matthews, *Psychosom Med*, 2000, 62: 608 - 612, p. 608). Empirical data on the positive effects of attending EHPS-conferences on your quality of life may be scarce, but anecdotal evidence supports the view that attending those conferences lifts your spirits. See you in St. Andrews this September.

Our Society's journal *Psychology & Health* now has an SSCI impact factor of 1.324. This is excellent news. The APA journal *Health Psychology* has a 1999 impact factor of 2.784, the *British Journal of Health Psychology* 1.073. Ask your librarian for the impact factors of other relevant journal in our area of health psychology. Our Editor-in-Chief, and former EHPS Secretary, Paul Norman looks forward to receiving your papers, especially those with a high probability of becoming a citation classic.

Receiving six issues of *Psychology & Health* per year is part of the EHPS-membership and represents a great additional advantage of being an EHPS-member. Check out our web site for details on how to become a member of the Society.

The Executive Committee of the EHPS is preparing the 2001 Membership Meeting and the National Delegates 2001 meeting, which will be held during the St Andrews conference. A task force of the Executive Committee is preparing policies regarding long-term planning of our Society, with financial and organisational issues as main topics.

Renew your EHPS-membership when you're in St Andrews, which will guarantee you'll continue receiving the Newsletter and the Journal.

Have a great summer and summer holidays.

Ad Kaptein, EHPS President

2. HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY'S INITIAL STEPS IN BULGARIA

Irina Todorova

The field of Health Psychology is taking its first steps in developing its identity in Bulgaria, primarily as a research discipline. These steps include the establishment of organizations, the coordination and implementation of research projects, the teaching of health psychology in institutions of higher education and the collaboration with non-governmental organizations which find the insights and practices of health psychology relevant to their work.

Organizations

One part of these initial steps was the establishment of the *Health Psychology Research Center* in Sofia, currently in its second year of existence. The Center has formulated as its goal the promotion of the discipline of health psychology by implementation of research projects, and by the teaching of undergraduate and graduate level courses in Health Psychology, Gender and Health, and Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods in Health Psychology. In these initiatives, the Center has been working with colleagues from the Department of Psychology at the University of Sofia, the Institute of Sociology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, The Southwestern University, as well as in close collaboration with several non-governmental organizations in Bulgaria, such as the *Women's Health Initiative*, devoted to implementing informational and social programs relevant to the improvement of health.

An imminent goal is the establishment of a professional association of psychologists working in the field of health psychology, a *Bulgarian branch of the EHPS*.

Current Research Projects in the Field of Health Psychology in Bulgaria

One of the studies currently in progress is entitled *Living With Infertility in Bulgaria: Social Discourses and Identity Construction* (I. Todorova). This project focuses on psychosocial aspects of infertility, specifically on the sense of self that is articulated in its socio-cultural context. We are especially interested in the ways in which women faced with infertility construct a valued self, while negotiating cultural discourses of stigma, responsibility, blame, etc. in Bulgarian society, as well as their positioning as agents among these discourses.

The above study on experiences of living infertility in Bulgaria is part of a larger cross-cultural study, which includes women in Romania and the US, entitled *The Meaning of Infertility in a Cross-Cultural Context*. The broader study has a comparative aspect and asks how women construct meaning of the situation of childlessness and a valued self in different cultures, what cultural discourses are appropriated and resisted? Additionally, this study explores the possibilities opened up by the use of qualitative methods in cross-cultural studies of the psychology of women's health.

A study on *Changing Values and Behaviors Related to Health in Bulgaria* (I. Todorova, T. Kotzeva, B. Dimitrova) was conducted among 800 college students. The study contains two interrelated parts.

The first stage consisted of the administration of the *Health and Behavior Survey* (Steptoe & Wardle). This questionnaire has been specifically designed for cross-cultural research and has been used in 23 countries, thus the study in Bulgaria is part of this broader comparative design. In addition to the survey, a second stage of the study is being planned to include semi-structured interviews with college students. The interviews will be designed to achieve an in-depth understanding of students' life-worlds and values as they relate to health and the prevention of illness.

A research project entitled *Individual Differences and Attitudes Toward Genetic Testing* (K. Petkova, Institute of Sociology, M. Dilova, E. Gerganov, E. Paspalanova, Institute of Psychology) was recently completed. The study focused on attitudes towards genetic testing in a sample of 914 participants, using the expectancy value model of Fishbein & Ajzen. The strength of positive attitude and belief patterns was investigated in relation to the following personality characteristics: authoritarianism, health locus of control, and trust in science.

The findings of several of these studies have been presented at the annual conferences of the EHPS.

Teaching of Health Psychology

The course *Gender and Health* has been proposed and included in the curriculum for the upcoming academic year of the New Bulgarian University in Sofia (NBU). It has been included as a basic course in the requirements for the Gender Studies program initiated by the NBU.

Upcoming plans for the 2002/2003 academic year include the introduction of an undergraduate course in Health Psychology at the Psychology Department of the NBU.

Health Education, Dissemination of Information, Advocacy and other Community Activities

As an outcome of the research study *Experiences of Infertility in Bulgaria* a patient organization *Families Without Children* was established. This organization is devoted to providing information about clinics and treatments to couples faced with infertility. It also plans to advocate the development of legislature, which will set criteria and regulate infertility treatment, the use of assisted reproductive technologies, as well as egg and sperm donation, which is currently non-existent in Bulgaria.

The *Women's Health Initiative in Bulgaria (WHI)* and *The Health Psychology Research Center* organized the translation, adaptation and publication of the Bulgarian version of the reference book exemplifying the international women's health movement *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. This project was undertaken as part of the WHI's broader purpose of advocating women's rights in regard to health, assuring equal rights for health care of women of all ethnic backgrounds in Bulgaria. The book will be published in the summer of 2001 by *Colibri*.

The next step is the dissemination of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, as well as outreach. One of the future goals is organizing workshops and interactive discussions of the book. The aim will be to reach women who have little access to the book via the standard distribution channels. Another aim of the outreach program will be to receive feedback, which will be helpful for preparing a new, even more extensively culturally adapted version in the future.

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3. 15TH EHPS CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENTS

St Andrews, Scotland, September 5th-8th

Conference Update

The scientific programme of the conference looks very promising, including 6 keynote addresses, 18 symposia and roundtables, 6 workshops, 3 poster sessions, and 160 individual oral presentations.

The provisional conference programme is available on the conference web site:
www.st-andrews.ac.uk/academic/psychology/events/health2001

The Executive Committee of EHPS meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 4th at 1 PM in St. Mary's College Hall.

The national delegates meeting is scheduled on Thursday, September 6th at 12.45 AM.

The EHPS members meeting will take place on Friday, September 7th at 12.45 AM.

2001 CREATE Workshop:

Health behaviour change: Intervention and evaluation

The workshop will be held from 2-4 September in St. Andrews, Scotland. It will be directed by: Professor Brian Oldenburg (Brisbane), Dr. Paul Kennedy (Oxford) and Mr. Paul Gardner (St Andrews).

Each day of the workshop will focus on a different theme:

- Models of individual behaviour change
- Models of group/population behaviour change
- Principles of statistical models for analysing change data

4. OTHER CONFERENCES / MEETINGS INFORMATION

- XXV International Congress of Applied Psychology, Singapore, 7th –12th July 2002. The first deadline for submission of abstracts is 30 June 2001, and final deadline is 30 October 2001. For more information visit the congress web site: <http://www.icap2002.org/>
- Second International Conference on Reconstructing Health Psychology: Critical and Qualitative Approaches, University of Aston, Birmingham, UK, 23rd –25th August, 2001. For more information visit the conference web site: http://click.egroups.com/1/9699/1/_/837610/_/976855507/
- The Third International Conference on Work Environment and Cardiovascular Diseases will be held at Duesseldorf University, Germany, 20th-22nd March, 2002. The deadline for abstract submission is September, 15 2001. For more information on the conference visit - <http://www.uni-duesseldorf.de/MedicalSociology/> and send the abstract as an e-mail attachment to siegrist@uni-duesseldorf.de
- The International Society of Behavioral Medicine Governing Council, Executive Committee, and ISBM Associates Meeting will take place in Mainz, Germany, 30th August- 1st September 2001. Additional information can be obtained from: <http://www.info-mainz.de/verkehrsverein>

5. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE EHPS (2000 – 2002)

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