

Health Psychology in Germany: Recent and current developments

Academic development

Several Bachelor and Master programs in Health Psychology have been established in the last years, for example at Freie Universität Berlin, the University of Education in Schwäbisch Gmünd, the Johannes Gutenberg Universität in Mainz, the University of Konstanz, the Open University of Hagen and the SRH University Heidelberg and Gera.

As an increasing number of German universities offer courses with Health Psychology contents, more and more academic posts become available. The universities of Graz, Hagen, Konstanz, Mainz, Ulm and the Freie Universität Berlin have established and maintained full professorships in Health Psychology. Additional full-professorships of Health Psychology and neighboring topics were established at private universities such as the Business School Potsdam, the SRH University Heidelberg, the Distance University of Hagen, the Jacobs University Bremen, and the Medical School Hamburg.

The Health Psychology section of the German Psychological Society has drafted recommendations for topics to be covered in Health Psychology courses with the ultimate goal of a collaborative curriculum for Health Psychology both at the B.A. and M.A. level. These guidelines will be discussed at the convention of the German Psychological Society in September 2012 in Bielefeld.

Applied development

Due to the conception of German health care as insurance-based (and paid), evidence-based prevention still lacks the status it should have. Prevention is mainly a task of NGOs and federal institutions (such as the Bundeszentrale für Gesundheitliche Aufklärung, BZgA) rather than being included in the medical system. At least so far, a development comparable to the UK with mandatory evidence-based guidelines for funding such as the MRC framework are still lacking and probably not coming up in the near future. Legislation to allow GPs or trained nurses to bill prevention counseling to the health insurances has been in the preparation stage for several years now, but attempts to pass it through parliament have failed.

Additionally, the role of evidence-based practice both in prevention as well as treatment in Germany still has development potentials.

Education in Health Psychology

The section of Health Psychology in the German Psychological Society (DGPs) additionally organises Health Psychology summer schools for graduate and Ph.D. students. At these summer schools, doctoral students have the opportunity to discuss their respective research programs both with peers and a round of Health Psychology experts. The 2011 summer school was hosted at the German Centre of Gerontology in Berlin. Invited experts were Christel Salewski, Michael Eid, Britta Renner, and Ralf Schwarzer. The next summer school will be held together with the next bi-annual convention of the section of Health Psychology in 2013.

Section of Health Psychology in the German Psychological Society (DGPs)

The section of Health Psychology in the German Psychological Society currently has 243 academic members. The section coordinates most activities in the domains of Health Psychology in Germany, among them educational issues, bi-annual Health Psychology conventions (see below) and a Journal (*Zeitschrift für Gesundheitspsychologie*; see below). The section meets annually, once at the bi-annual Health Psychology conventions, once at the bi-annual National Psychology Conventions.

The section of Health Psychology is closely interwoven with the EHPS, as many of its members are also members of the EHPS. The section's website is: www.gesundheitspsychologie.net (contents are all in German).

The section was approached by the Cooperation for Sustainable Prevention that is founded by the Federal Centre for Health Education to support the Memorandum „Research Funding Prevention. The German Cancer Society has also stated interest in cooperation.

Conventions

The section of Health Psychology hosts a bi-annual convention. The next convention in 2013 will be hosted by the Université de Luxembourg.

At the bi-annual conventions of the German Psychological Society (DGPs), Health Psychology forms a prominent topic. The 2012 convention of the DGPs will be held from September 23 to 27 in Bielefeld.

Health Psychology Journal

The German Health Psychology journal (*Zeitschrift für Gesundheitspsychologie*) was founded in 1993 and is publishing 4 issues per year. It is a peer-reviewed journal with four issues per year. At the moment, there are about 200 individual and numerous academic subscriptions to the journal. The current editor is Arnold Lohaus (Universität Bielefeld), co-editors are Matthias Jerusalem, Gert Kaluza, Carl-Walter Kohlmann and Britta Renner, who is also the incoming editor.

The journal has been accepted for the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) and had its first impact factor published in 2010 (an improvable 0.13). It is indexed in MEDLINE, PsycInfo, PsycLit, PsyJournals, Psynindex and IBZ.

The journal currently accepts articles both in German and English, and it is being discussed to switch the journal towards an all-English journal within the next years. The journal's website (www.hogrefe.de/zeitschriften/zeitschrift-fuer-gesundheitspsychologie/) gives more information on the journal including editors, policy and submission guidelines.

Current research

There is a broad range of academic research related to Health Psychology topics in Germany. The section of Health Psychology currently also compiles a register of evidence-based Health Psychology programs (see www.gesundheitspsychologie.net).

EHPS-related activities in Germany

The section of Health Psychology in Germany is closely interwoven with EHPS activities. Thus, information on EHPS activities such as the meetings and the annual CREATE and SYNERGY workshops is available to all members of the section via the webpage, a mailing list and the News section in *Zeitschrift für Gesundheitspsychologie*. EHPS meetings are advertised at both the bi-annual Health Psychology conventions (in terms of flyers, but also personal communication) as well as the national psychology conventions. Membership in the EHPS and especially participation in CREATE workshops is being recommended to all attendants of the annual summer schools.

In order to reach more interested persons, information on EHPS meetings and workshops are distributed via the mailing lists of the neighboring sections in the DGPs such as Social Psychology, Psychology of Education, Developmental Psychology, Clinical Psychology and Medical Psychology.