

HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY IN LATVIA, REPORT 2014/2015

LATVIAN HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY ASSOCIATION (LHPA)

In 2014/2015, the number of LHPA members has increased and currently the organization has 24 members. Jeļena Koļesņikova is chairwoman of the board since 2015: (<http://www.veselibaspsihologija.lv>).

LHPA members have continued to deepen and broaden the understanding of health psychology and its role in human health and quality of life, participating in discussions with colleagues, professional psychologists, as well as professionals from other sectors and politicians. This has led to legislative developments (see below).

To strengthen the awareness to health psychology, LHPA organized several workshops for professionals and wider Latvian public (including “Well-being: Theory and practice”, “Cognitive behavioral approach to working with different client groups”) and, in cooperation with Rīga Stradiņš University, participated at Latvian Psychology Days (<http://www.psihologijasdienas.lv/>), organizing the following events: "Health psychology history and principles", "Short excursus in health psychology", "Health psychologist's professional activity", "Health perception and behavior", "Regulation of bodily functions and health".

The Latvian Medical Association's discussion with industry experts, held on the topic of "Health Behaviors" in 2015, was attended by LHPA member and lecturer at Department of Health Psychology and Pedagogy in Rīga Stradiņš University Aelita Vagale.

Latvian residents have the opportunity to learn about health psychology in social networks (Twitter @VesPsiRSU)

LEGISSLATIVE DEVELOPMENTS

In 2014/2015, active work was continued on the Psychologist's Professional Activity draft law in which health psychology is named as one of the areas of activity of psychologists. In October 2014, LHPA and Latvian Association of the Professional Rehabilitation Organizations reiterated the letter *About the role of psychologists in the health care system* to the Latvian Ministry of Health and the Saeima (=parliament) Social and Employment Matters Committee.

ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENTS

Health psychology at Rīga Stradiņš University:

(1) Professional Master study programme "Health Psychology". The first graduates.

From the 2014/2015 academic year, Dr. psych., assoc. prof. Jeļena Koļesņikova started to manage the Master's study programme “Health Psychology” launched in 2012. Following the programme approval, the health psychology programme study courses were analyzed and several courses were restructured or new courses developed, improving the programme content according to development trends of health psychology as well as the recommendations by students, lecturers, employers and social partners (representatives of professional associations).

After the successful accreditation at Latvian Ministry of Education, the first 11 young specialists graduated the programme in 2015. Several graduates have already started work in the health care system, mainly in rehabilitation facilities; this may be interpreted as an indicator of the high esteem of the new study programme.

(2) Department of Health Psychology and Pedagogy

The development of health psychology programme contributed to the creation of new unit: the Department of Health Psychology and Pedagogy was established in Public Health and Social Welfare Faculty, Rīga Stradiņš University on July 1, 2014. The head of the department is Dr. psych., assoc. prof. Kristīne Mārtinsonē, who previously created and managed study programme "Health Psychology". Four doctors were involved in the newly-created department, thus strengthening the scientific and methodological capacity of the programme. At present, 12 lecturers are working in the department: (see more at: <http://www.rsu.lv/fakultates/svslf/katedras/veselibas-psihologijas-un-pedagogijas-katedra>).

Active work in the development of health psychology was carried out in the department:

- A text of the collective monograph "Health psychology" was written (scientific editors Dr. psych. K. Mārtinsonē, Dr. med. V. Sudraba, Dr. psych. J. Koļeņņikova). The textbook encompasses the basic concepts of the field in Latvian for the first time.
- Student's scientific society in psychology started operating at the end of 2014 (leader Dr. psych. Jeļena Ļevina).
- The lecturers have developed three optional courses in health psychology for students of the other programmes of health care studies (Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Rehabilitation). These courses will launch at 2015/2016, promoting awareness of the health psychology among medical students and other health care professionals, and, hopefully contribute to enhanced integration of health psychologists within the multidisciplinary team in the future.
- The lecturers developed and offered two courses related to health psychology for continuing education of health professionals.
- In April 2015, there was organized scientific conference, which included health psychology issues. In the conference, Dr. Efrat Neter from Israel gave a live video presentation on the eHealth literacy: <http://www.rsu.lv/images/stories/dokumenti/prezentacijas/eHealthLiteracyLatvia2015.pdf>.

PUBLICATIONS AND CONFERENCES

Health psychology was presented as a field in Volume 2 of the collective monograph 'Psychology' issued in 2015:

- Stokenberga, I., Freimane, G., Sudraba, V., Bite, I. (2015). Veselība un slimība psiholoģijā [Health and illness in psychology]. Mārtinsonē, K., Miltuze, A. (eds.). *Psiholoģija, 2.sēj. Personība, grupa, sabiedrība, kultūra*, (171 – 230). Rīga: Zvaigzne ABC.

Reports on the development of health psychology in Latvia were also in different contexts;

In Latvian:

- Mārtinsonē, K., Freimane, G., Mihailova, S. (2014) Veselības psiholoģija Latvijā: izaicinājumi, to risināšanas iespējas un ieguvums sabiedrībai [Latvian health psychology: challenges, options and the benefits to society]. *Sabiedrība un kultūra. Rakstu krājums XIV*. Sast. A. Medveckis. Liepāja: LiePA.

In Russian:

- Мартинсонэ К., Фрейманэ Г., Колесникова Е. (2014). Психология здоровья в Латвии в контексте современных европейских исследований [Health psychology in Latvia in the context of contemporary european studies]. "Медицинская психология в России" nr. 5(28): http://www.mprj.ru/archiv_global/2014_5_28/nomer/nomer05.php

In English:

- Neter, E (2015). Dr. Kristine Martinsone – an Academic Pioneer. The story of Health Psychology in Latvia is the story of Kristine Martinsone. *European Health Psychologist*. Vol 17, No 1 http://openhealthpsychology.com/ehp/index.php/contents/article/view/766/pdf_42

More than 10 reports on topics of local health psychology were provided both at local conferences (RSU Scientific conference; University of Latvia Scientific conference, Psychology section) and at international conferences (14th European Congress of Psychology; 5th International interdisciplinary scientific conference *Society Health Welfare* “Family Well-Being and Human Capital Improvement in Changing Society: Strategy and Practice”; The 2nd International Interdisciplinary Conference Biopsychological Basics Of Life In Education And Health, RTTEMA; 28th Conference of the European Health Psychology Society *The Approach towards the Economics of Happiness in the Baltic States*; Международная научно-практическая конференция «Медицинская (клиническая) психология: исторические традиции и современная практика» [International scientific-practical conference "Medical (clinical) psychology: historical traditions and modern practice]).