

Country: Latvia

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I) HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY IN THE COUNTRY LATVIA

On 30.03.2017, a Law of Psychologists was adopted in Latvia which will enter into force on 01.10.2018. The aim of the Law of Psychologists is the following: “to regulate professional activities of psychologists in order to ensure qualified services of psychologists’ professional activities”. The Law states that psychologists may carry out their professional activities in six areas of professional fields including the health psychology.

According to the Cabinet Regulation No 264 of May 23, 2017 “Regulation on the Professions Classifier, Basic Tasks Relevant for the Profession, and Requirements for the Qualification”, the title “clinical and health psychologist” with the code 2634 02 is included in the Latvian Professions Classifier.

II) EDUCATION, TRAINING & PROFESSIONALIZATION

1. Advocacy and promotion of health psychology

The representation and advocacy of the interests of health psychologists in Latvia and professionals working in this field was facilitated by the work and active involvement of the Latvian Health Psychology association (LHPA) (together with all other professional associations of psychologists) in the elaboration of the Law of Psychologists. This work will be continued by engaging in the drafting of Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers, currently being implemented on the basis of this Law.

In cooperation with the Latvian Association of Rehabilitation Professional Organisations, LHPA prepares and submits proposals to the Ministry of Health regarding the status of health psychologists in medical environment.

LHPA participates in the preparation of the comments of the Law on Psychologists organised by the Latvian Psychologists Society, which are necessary and will be useful for the professional activities of psychologists in Latvia. The working group is led by the LHPA member prof. K. Mārtinsone.

LHPA participated in the “Professional Psychologists in Latvia after the adoption of the Psychologists Act” at the 3rd Congress of Latvian Psychologists, where the participants discussed the status of the psychologist's profession and the situation in our country, and agreed on the key factors to raise the quality of work and the prestige of the profession of psychologists. The results of the work are reflected in a joint resolution. Health psychology has been presented as a professional field of psychologists’ activities at the sessions of the section of the Congress.

2. Education and training initiatives/programs

Rīga Stradiņš University (RSU) Faculty of Public Health and Social Welfare, in the Department of Health Psychology and Pedagogy, has started to implement the Professional Master Program “Health Psychology” since 2012. It is important to mention that the RSU is the only educational institution in Latvia where health psychologists are being trained.

For further career development of graduates of the professional master's study programme “Health Psychology”, as well as for stimulation of research in the field of health psychology, the RSU has established a doctoral study programme in psychology.

RSU has developed a Psychology Laboratory, which will provide a more qualitative learning process and promote the involvement of students in research, as well as will promote the development of evidence-based practices.

LHPA members have submitted and implemented continuing education courses in health psychology at the RSU: prevention and management of stress, burnout syndrome and compassion fatigue, in which students, psychologists, physicians, functional specialists and other helping professionals have participated.

3. Activities for students

RSU academic staff and students have created a pilot model for a health behaviour promotion program for RSU students: in 2017, a web-based intervention to promote health behaviour for RSU students was developed for physical activity, time management and stress. Currently, three developed pilot programs can be found in the RSU e-moodle platform. Further development of this project is planned.

One of the students' activities at the RSU Department of Health Psychology and Pedagogy is the scientific group of students of psychology, that aims to provide students with the opportunity to improve their research

competence, develop the ability to conduct independent research corresponding to the basic principles of scientific research, to present and to discuss the results of the research by developing critical and productive thinking.

RSU students cooperating with LHPA participated in the 4th Annual Psychology Days 2016. During the Psychology Days, open lectures “Promoting healthy lifestyles and e-interventions” and “Health perception and health behaviour” were organised. Furthermore, during the Psychology Days in 2017: Open lectures “Health Psychology” and “The Functions and Health of the Human Body” has been organised at the RSU.

Students participated in the seminars and open lectures organised by the RSU Department of Health Psychology and Pedagogy:

(a) Shulamith Kreitler, professor emeritus at the Tel Aviv University (Israel) led a seminar on psycho-emotional aspects of cancerous diseases and basic principles for providing psycho-emotional support to patients with cancer and their families.

(b) Yael Netz, professor at the Wingate University (Israel) led a workshop on healthy ageing and physical activity.

(c) Ada Zohar, professor at the Ruppin Academic Centre for Psychology (Israel) led a seminar on Heart Rate Variability - its structure, measurement and implications for physical and mental health.

d) Aleksandra Yaltonskaya, associated professor at the EMC Medical School (Russia) led a seminar on Motivational Interview.

III) ACTIVITIES

1. Major research projects (under way)

1. Latvian National Research Programme Biomedicine for Public Health (BIOMEDICINE) 2014 – 2017 (sub-project Nr.5.8.2.).

a) Sub-project: “Establishing the Net Attainable Benefits of Long-term Exercise”.

b) Sub-project: “Development of the New technology - Latvian Clinical Personality Inventory”.

2. National Research Program 5.2. “Economic Transformation, Smart Growth, Governance and Legal Framework for the State and Society for Sustainable Development - a New Approach to the Creation of a Sustainable Learning Community (EKOSOC-LV)” 2014 -2017.

3. Project No. 48-23/2017/0452. 2017-2020 “Development of a Computerised Personality Assessment System of an Individual”.

2. Conferences & meetings

1. On March 16, 2016, LHPA participated in the Annual Conference of the “Latvian Association of Rehabilitation Professional Organisations”, where resolution was developed on Latvian social and health care legislation and provision of professional rehabilitation services in Latvia.

2. On April 28, 2017, RSU Department of Health Psychology and Pedagogy has organised annual international scientific and practical conference “Health and Personal Development: an Integrative Approach” in co-operation with LHPA.

3. On May 27-28, 2016: International Scientific Conference “Society, Integration, Education” of the Rezekne Academy of Technologies. RSU Department of Health Psychology and Pedagogy organised a section on psychology.

3. Publications

Krūmiņa, A.A., & Ļubenko, J. (2016). Web-Based Intervention for Developing Long-Term Health Literacy of Individuals: Possibilities and Limitations. *Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability*, 18(1), 69-83. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1515/jtes-2016-0006>

Mārtinsone K. Sudraba V. (red.) (2016). *Veselības psiholoģija [Health psychology]*. Rīga: RSU izdevniecība. 240

Perepjolkina, V., Kolesnikova, J., Mārtinsone, K., Stephens, A. & Rancans, E. (2017). Criterion-based Validity of the Depression Scale of Latvian Clinical Personality Inventory. *Society. Integration. Education. Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference*, 1, 603-616

4. Awards, recognitions etc.

Prof. K. Mārtinsone has received recognition from the Ministry of Education and Science for the contribution to the development of health psychology in Latvia.

The following working groups have been set up and active at the RSU:

- Working Group “Development of the Latvian Clinical Personality Test with Functional Indicators”.

- Working Group “Establishing the Net Attainable Benefits of Long-term Exercise”.

- Working group on the web-based intervention “A Program for Promoting Health Behaviour of RSU Students”.

5. Collaboration with other societies (National and International); projects; groups etc.

Cooperation with Latvian professional associations of psychologists aimed to develop the Law of Psychologists took place in 2016-2017, and is currently continuing with the elaboration of proposals for Cabinet Regulations.

Cooperation with the “Latvian Association of Rehabilitation Professional Organisations” (LARPO) regarding the preparation and submission of the documentation of the status of a health psychologist in medical environment to the Ministry of Health is being carried out.

6. Promotion and member recruitment

RSU bachelor's study program “Psychology”, the master's study program “Health Psychology” and the doctoral study program “Psychology” offers the students the opportunity to get involved in the work of LHPA as well as to attend seminars and workshops organised by the LHPA.

LHPA is a member of LARPO.

7. Communication

1) From December 2016 until May 2017, the LHPA website was renovated and updated in terms of both content and design (new hosting with broader possibilities) (see <http://veselibaspsihologija.lv/lv/>).

2) A Twitter account (733 tweets, 219 followers) is maintained.

3) A Facebook page has been created (see <https://www.facebook.com/veselibaspsihologija/>).

4) On November 4, 2016, an article was written in the Latvian news portals “Piejūras slimnīca”, “Delfi”, “RSU”: Fear of cancer - an obstacle on the way to health. <http://piejurasslimnica.lv/lv/aktualitates/raksts/bailes-no-veza-skerslis-cela-uz-veselibu>”.

5) A blog: Practical Health Psychology. The topics of blog are translated into Latvian by Gunta Freimane and prof. Kristīne Mārtinsons (see <http://practicalhealthpsychology.com/lv/vision/>).

IV) PLANNED/FUTURE ACTIVITIES AND INITIATIVES

1. Promote RSU doctoral study program “Psychology” in which doctoral students will develop interdisciplinary research.
2. Involvement in the events organised in the framework of the 5th Annual Psychology Days 2017.
3. Development of the RSU web-based intervention “A program for promoting health behaviour of RSU students”.
4. RSU Department of Health Psychology and Pedagogy, conference: 4th International Scientific and Practical Conference “Health and Personal Development: an Interdisciplinary Approach” 2018, Riga, Latvia.
5. Participate in projects:
 - a) Project No. 48-23/2017/0452. 2017-2020 “Development of a Computerised Personality Assessment System of an Individual”.
 - b) Project NPAD-2017-10077 “Age is Not an Obstacle”.
6. Collaboration with state administration institutions and professional organisations to develop proposals for improving the regulatory framework for the integration of a health psychologist into a healthcare environment.