

# Clinical Foundations of Psychological Science Notes

## Health Psychology

### Goals of health psychology

- Understand psychological and sociocultural influence on health
- How do people stay healthy?
- Why do we become ill?
- How do we respond when ill?

### Burden of disease

- DALYs - sum of years of life lost due to premature death or disability
- Diseases contributing the most DALYs
  - Cancer
  - Cardiovascular disease
  - Mental health problems
  - Musculoskeletal disease
  - Injuries
- Behaviours contributing the most DALYs
  - Tobacco use
  - Alcohol use
  - Physical inactivity
  - Drug use

### History of health psychology

- Freud thought that psychological diseases such as hysteria had a physical cause (early 20th century)
  - Psychosomatic diseases (diseases that are caused due to a conflict between unconscious desires)
- Consequences of stress was examined by Hans Selye in 1950
- Behavioural health psychology began in 1980 in response to the rise of lifestyle diseases

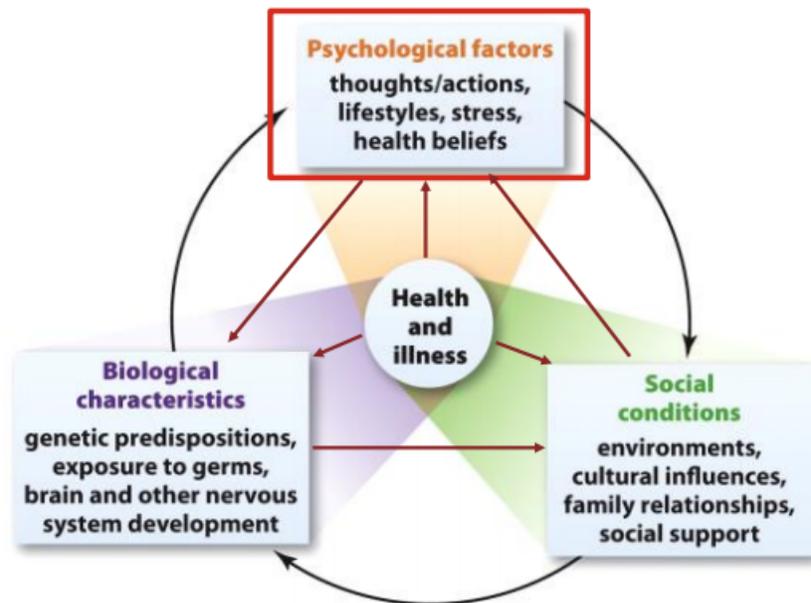
### Changes in cause of death over the past 50 years

- Reduced neonatal deaths and deaths from infectious disease
- Increased preventable deaths from chronic diseases

## Biopsychosocial model of health

- Supports the preventable nature of most chronic illness
- Wellbeing is on a continuum
- Contrasts with the medical model (every disease can be understood from a purely biological perspective)

**Well-being:** A positive state that includes striving for optimal health and life satisfaction



## How do placebos work? (part of the psychological section of the biopsychosocial framework) - Mediation

- Placebo effect: An improvement in physical or mental health following treatment with a placebo—that is, with a drug or treatment that has no active component on the disorder being treated.
- Falls under the psychological branch of the biopsychosocial model
- Classical conditioning
  - Association with times the treatment has worked in the past
- Cognitive expectation
  - Have a greater sense of control (eases anxiety/stress)
  - Alters symptom perception
- Natural course of the disease
- Nocebo effect: a perceived detriment to health caused by negative expectations of treatment or prognosis
- Order of placebo effectiveness:

- Surgery, injections, capsules, pills
- Blue pills are better for sedation and red are better for stimulation
- Two pills are better than one pill
- Large pills are better than small pills
- Coloured pills are better than white pills
- Placebo effects work better in relation to pain, anxiety, and mood
- Greater effects in hospitals

### **Moderators**

- Psychological moderators (reactions to illness)
  - Experience of symptoms is changed by psychological factors
    - Eg. willingness to engage in rehabilitation moderates the effect of disease on mortality
- Physiological mediators
  - Depression is a predictor of susceptibility to heart disease (physiological moderator)
    - Hormonal and platelet abnormalities caused by depression can increase the risk of heart disease
  - Stress depletes the immune system and therefore increases infection
    - Immune functioning is a mediator between stress and infection
- We know that something is a full or partial mediator if the correlation between two things disappears or greatly declines when the mediator is controlled for

### **Risk factors**

- Biological, behavioural or environmental factor that is associated with the development of a disease or injury
- Health enhancing factors are often less pleasurable than health risking factors
- Health risking behaviour: a behaviour that increases the risk of illness
  - Consequences often occur in the future
- Health enhancing behaviour: a protective health behaviour that is intentionally performed for the purpose of preventing illness or enhancing well-being

### **How to change a health behaviour?**

- Self monitoring
- Goal setting
- Social support

### **Optimism bias and health behaviours**

- Perceiving oneself as less susceptible than others to disease