Health psychology

Defining health psychology:
- Devoted to understanding psychological influences on health, including how to stay healthy, why people become ill, and how individuals react when they become ill
- The World Health Organisation claims that health is a complete state of well being, rather than the absence of a disease
  - Mental, physical and social
  - A holistic view of what health is

FOUR areas of health psychology:
1. **Health promotion and maintenance** → encouraging people to be healthy.
2. **Prevention and treatment of illness** → primary (before illness occurs), secondary (early stages of illness) and tertiary care (treatment of well developed illness).
3. **Causes and correlations of health, illness and dysfunction** → what causes illness and what is associated with illness?
4. **Improving health care systems and creating health policy** → how can costs be improved and occurrence of illness be reduced?

Aims of health psychology:
- Reduce morbidity and mortality
- **Morbidity**: number of cases that exist at a given point in time
  - Incidence → new cases
  - Prevalence → total number of cases
- **Mortality**: number of deaths that occur as a result of a particular illness

Mind-body monism and dualism:

Greeks → Hippocrates and Galen	Dualism, humoral (fluid) theory, physical causes for medical problems
Middle ages	Monism, Supernatural causes for health problems
Renaissance → Descartes	Dualism, Descartes believed mind and body communicated via pineal gland, introduction of autopsies
Psychodynamic → Freud	Both monism and dualism, unconscious tensions lead to illness
Psychosomatic → Dunbar and Alexander	Monism, psychological issues produce physiological effects through autonomic nervous system, not very trusted due to flawed methodology.
Contemporary	Monism, health determined by psychological, social and physiological effects.

Popularity and rise of health psychology:
- Over time, causes of death have **transformed from acute to chronic**
  - 50% are preventable as contributing factors (psychological and social) can be managed

- 50% of the population have a chronic illness
- 80% of elderly have a chronic illness

How are chronic diseases linked to health psychology?
- Psychological and social factors contribute to chronic diseases, and health psychologists develop methods to deviate from such factors
- Make life easier with treatment by helping individuals to adjust to their changing health state
- Health psychologists have 3 primary roles:
    - Health service provider
    - Teacher for health promotion
    - Researcher

Why health psychology is becoming increasingly popular:
- **Move from acute to chronic illnesses** → previously discussed
- **Advances in technology and research** → Making informed decisions, help deciding on treatment models based on outcomes
- **Expanded health care services** → Main emphasis on preventing and reducing health care costs by developing cost effective programs
- **Acceptance of psychologists** → Move from problem patients to dealing with everyone, and a growing recognition of psychosocial factors in health by WHO
- **Demonstrated contributions** → Research on benefits of informed consent, and HPs normally have more statistical and research training than doctors themselves, thus allowing different healthcare to be administered

Models of healthcare:
Biomedical model:
- Focus on the illness rather than health care
- Psychosocial process don't affect disease
- Pros:
    - Led to pathogen research
    - Development of medical technology
- Cons:
    - Reductionist
    - Dualistic
    - Disease-oriented

Biopsychosocial model:
- Belief that heath and illness are due to biological, psychological AND social factors
- Advantages: macro-level processes, mind/body can't be separated, emphasis on health and illness, not just one cause

Future of health psychology:
Health promotion:
- Good health should be a personal *and* collective achievement

- o Can only happen through the interplay of the medical system, mass media and legislation
- Most people know that they need to practice good healthcare behaviours, but aren't motivated → possible focus on motivating people
- Research into most cost effective behaviour altering programs
  - o Mass interventions at school and work