

Unit 24: Health Psychology

Delivery guidance

This unit gives learners an understanding of the practice and theoretical underpinning of health psychology and the important role it plays in understanding behaviour in health and ill health. Learners will understand how health psychology can inform us of health-related behaviours and diet, exercise and work–life balance. They will also learn about intervention and support through the exploration of the strategies and models of management in relation to stress, chronic pain and ill health.

Approaching the unit

Learners are expected to develop the academic skills and processes involved in research while gaining an understanding of the influences and impacts of health psychology practices, management models and strategies involved in the intervention support of individual needs.

Health psychology, particularly as an internally assessed unit, lends itself to active participation. Learners will be able to apply their knowledge of health psychology and practice to case studies across the main learning aims.

Delivering the learning aims

Learning aims A and B are primarily concerned with the theoretical underpinning of health psychological practices and the different contributions involved in the practice of support of behaviour in health and ill health. With the appropriate tutor support, learners should undertake research on the influences, impacts and contributions of the practice in which a model and/or strategy can be applied in support of the individual's health and behaviour. The broad approach to research is to equip learners with appropriate skills and knowledge required when making decisions for the application of health psychology. The tutor support in this unit will also enable learners to understand analytical and evaluation skills that will enable them to highlight how health psychology is able to contribute to an understanding of the contemporary issues in health. Worksheets in relation to the key terms and command verbs that may be appropriately used in the learner's academic application could help with this.

Learning aims C and D give learners an understanding of the health psychological models and strategies to aid and support service user health and wellbeing. Learners should be encouraged to draw on their key skills and knowledge developed and apply a detailed analysis to reach justified decisions, with supported professional articulated arguments of models and strategies in health psychology for use with the service user. Tutors are encouraged to discuss with learners the theoretical underpinning of health psychology alongside the different strategies and models that could be of use in case studies. Learners therefore could be given different novel case studies to initiate discussions with peers and groups in relation to the evidence and best practice of health psychology. In addition, tutors could invite professional guest speakers/visiting practitioners to give learners the chance to discuss how effective health psychology has been in identifying various behaviours and the appropriate treatment of individuals.

It is important to note that tutors give learners an understanding of the ethical obligations regarding confidentiality required throughout the unit.

The unit may highlight some sensitive topics and therefore learners should be given the opportunity at the beginning of the unit (and subsequently) to raise any concerns. Additional support and signposting can be offered.

Assessment model

Learning aim	Key content areas	Recommended assessment approach
A Understand influences and beliefs towards health and ill health resulting in the development of health psychology as a discipline	A1 Concepts of health psychology, health and ill health A2 Influences on beliefs and behaviours towards health and ill health	A report on the role of health psychology, health and ill health concepts in the management of contemporary issues in health.
B Examine how psychology contributes to the management of contemporary issues in health	B1 Contemporary issues in health B2 Health psychology in relation to contemporary issues	
C Investigate models of stress and related strategies for managing stress	C1 Development of stress models C2 Stress management strategies	A report on the use of strategies and psychological theories in managing stress, pain and ill health for a selected service user.
D Explore the role of psychology in dealing with pain and ill health	D1 Concepts of pain and ill health D2 Psychological theories related to pain and ill health	

Assessment guidance

This unit is internally assessed. There is a maximum number of two summative assignments for this unit. Tutors should refer to the assessment guidance in the specification for specific detail, particularly in relation to the requirements for Pass, Merit and Distinction grades.

It is suggested that **learning aims A and B** are assessed via a written report. Within the report, learners are required to embark on research exploring the underpinning, management and strategies of health psychology in terms of its content, approach and application. Learners are also required to pay particular attention to the beliefs and influences that inform behaviour alongside the development of the practice of health psychology as a discipline.

Learning aims C and D require learners to demonstrate their understanding of the models and management of stress with a service user. They should highlight their understanding of how these models and strategy interventions are to be applied and what, if any, support they can provide to the service user/case study. There should be evidence of the strategies and psychological theoretical underpinning being applied to also manage pain and ill health for the service user. An evaluation of the different methods of provision is to be noted, with an emphasis on the role of health psychology as a discipline and service in support of the service user/case study.

Getting started

This gives you a starting place for one way of delivering the unit, based around the recommended assessment approach in the specification.

Introduction

Introduce this unit by asking learners to map out their understanding and preconceived ideas in relation to health psychology as a discipline in identifying health and ill health behaviour, while also providing support to the service user. This could be undertaken as a reflective exercise, making good use of the specification unit and the varied health psychological models and strategies for use. The tutor could encourage learners to share their knowledge and understanding of health psychology and the management of contemporary issues in health with their peers. This will be helpful for learners to express and gather knowledge from others for its application.

Learning aim A: Understand influences and beliefs towards health and ill health resulting in the development of health psychology as a discipline

Learners must gather an understanding of health psychology as a discipline.

- For A1:
 - definitions of health psychology
 - models of health
 - medical model
 - biopsychosocial model
 - health-related behaviours
 - the 'sick role'
 - the development of health psychology as a discipline.

Learners should be able to demonstrate an understanding of the beliefs and behaviours towards health and ill health.

- For A2:
 - cultural and differing attitudes
 - religion
 - socioeconomic classes
 - environmental, population and infrastructure
 - individual, age and gender
 - education.

Learning aim B: Examine how psychology contributes to the management of contemporary issues in health

Learners should be able to demonstrate the different contributions in terms of benefits of practice.

- For B1:
 - smoking and substance dependency
 - eating behaviour
 - exercise
 - childbirth.

Learners should be able to highlight the relation of health psychology to contemporary issues.

- For B2:
 - health implications
 - social learning perspective, addictive behaviour
 - psychological theory of obesity, anorexia and bulimia
 - ethical obligations
 - exercise benefits.

Learning aim C: Investigate models of stress and related strategies for managing stress

Learners should be able to understand the models associated with stress and its management.

- For C1:
 - fight or flight model, adaptation syndrome
 - life events theory
 - psychosocial models of stress
 - role of psychological factors, locus of control and personality type.

Learners should be able to consider and understand the coping strategies for stress.

- For C2:
 - coping strategies and responses, including problem-focused, emotional-focused and defence mechanisms
 - stress-illness link, effects of stress on the immune system
 - positive coping mechanisms, relaxation therapy
 - negative coping mechanisms, alcohol and/or substance abuse

- behavioural techniques, cognitive techniques
- importance of professional knowledge of stress management and strategies.

Learning aim D: Explore the role of psychology in dealing with pain and ill health

Learners should be able to identify and explain the role of the professional psychologist in dealing with pain and ill health.

- For D1:
 - theories of pain
 - role of psychological factors in pain perception
 - organic pain, psychogenic pain
 - acute and chronic pain
 - injury without pain, pain without injury
 - measuring pain
 - controlling pain, application of psychological approach to alleviate pain.

Learners should be able to demonstrate their understanding of the psychological theoretical underpinning related to pain and ill health.

- For D2:
 - diagnosis and behaviour change
 - alleviation of symptoms, coping mechanisms
 - effect on families and dependants
 - illnesses, including heart disease, cancer, back pain and asthma.

Details of links to other BTEC units and qualifications, and to other relevant units/qualifications

This unit links to:

- Unit 4: Principles of Effective Care
- Unit 5: Principles of Safe Practice in Health and Social Care
- Unit 6: Promoting Public Health
- Unit 8: Sociological Perspectives
- Unit 9: Psychological Perspectives
- Unit 23: Complementary Therapies for Health and Social Care

Resources

Textbooks

Brain, C – *Advances Subsidiary Psychology Approaches and Methods* (Nelson Thornes, 2000) ISBN 9780174900573

Forshaw, M – *Essential Health Psychology* (Hodder Arnold, 2002) ISBN 9780340759714

Harari, P and Legge, K – *Psychology and Health* (Heinemann, 2001) ISBN 9780435806590

Journals

Health Psychology

British Journal of Health Psychology

British Journal of Psychology

Websites

www.bps.org.uk

British Psychological Society

www.hcpc-uk.org

Health psychology practitioner registration

www.professionalstandards.org.uk

Professional Standards Authority (UK)



BTEC INTERNATIONAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE
UNIT 24: HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY

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