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## GENERAL AND MEDICAL PSYCHOLOGY. THE ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGISTS IN HEALTH CARE DELIVERY

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**ABSTRACT:** Advances in the biomedical and the behavioral sciences have paved the way for the integration of medical practice towards the biopsychosocial approach. Therefore, dealing with health and illness overtakes looking for the presence or absence of the disease and infirmity (the biomedical paradigm) to the biopsychosocial paradigm in which health means a state of complete physical, psychological and social well-being. Psychology as a behavioral health discipline is the key to the biopsychosocial practice, and plays a major role in understanding the concept of health and illness. The clinical role of psychologists as health providers is diverse with the varying areas of care giving (primary, secondary and tertiary care) and a variety of subspecialties. Overall, psychologists assess, diagnose, and treat the psychological problems and the behavioral dysfunctions resulting from, or related to physical and mental health.

**Keywords:** Psychology, health psychology, biopsychosocial, and behavioral medicine.

### INTRODUCTION

Advances in psychological, medical, and physiological research have led to a new way of thinking about health and illness. This is reflected in the biopsychosocial model that views health and illness as the product of a combination of factors including biological characteristics (e.g. genetic predisposition), behavioral factors, (e.g. lifestyle, stress, health beliefs) and social conditions (e.g. cultural influences, family relationships and social support). This conceptualization of health and illness has many scientific and practical

benefits. At the top of this list is the fact that people can reduce their risk of developing major medical problems, receive more effective treatment, and reduce their health care cost when they seek treatment from an interdisciplinary team including behavioral health providers.

It is worth noticing here, that in the recent past, dealing with health and illness was based on the biomedical paradigm in which the biological aspects were the main focus of the scientist and practitioner. Good health was simply seen as the absence of diseases and



injuries, and their presence meant ill health. The proper treatment for that model meant that there were biological interventions in order to improve the biological damage. As a result, health providers were divided into two groups, the physicians who followed the biomedical thinking and who had complete authority to deal with patients, and their assistants whose role it was to follow the physicians' orders. At present, the understanding of the body-mind-behavior relationship has dramatically changed medical system and practice. This change, from the biomedical paradigm to the biopsychosocial medicine, characterizes the current holistic model of health provision.

Overall, the biopsychosocial model reflects the belief that biological, psychological, and social factors interact in an interdependent or systemic way to maintain health or cause illness. This approach (biopsychosocial paradigm) has become universal, and has been endorsed and adopted by the World Health Organization. Because behavior plays a vital role in mental and physical health, behavioral health is becoming the cornerstone of the biopsychosocial practice. Cassidy described the way behavior may positively or negatively affect the body by stating that lifestyles, life-events, and bad behavior are directly related to health and illness; the way we think about events determines our response to them in developing healthy or unhealthy behaviors and changes in behavior. Attitudes to health determine whether we hear or listen to advice from health professionals, and a person's personality may predispose the body to certain dysfunctions. Psychology as the science of behavior and mental processes emphasizes training and knowledge about such aspects (e.g. development over the lifespan, learning, motivations, experiences, emotions, cognition,

social behavior and attitudes, personality etc). Moreover, it strives to understand how biological, behavioral, and social factors influence health and illness. Thus, psychologists as behavioral health providers play a major role in understanding how biological, behavioral, and social factors influence health, and illness. They are equipped with training, skills, and knowledge to understand how basic behavioral and cognitive processes (e.g. cognition, emotion, motivation, development, personality, social and cultural interaction) prepare the body to develop dysfunctions. They are trained, on the other hand, to perceive how these behavioral and cognitive functions are altered, the factors that contribute to their alteration, and how these dysfunctions are diagnosed and treated. In dealing with such problems, they are also trained and skilled to use several psychological, psychodiagnostic and psychotherapeutic techniques which help and affect the abilities of individuals to function in diverse settings and roles. In addition, they help people to modify their behavior and lifestyle so as to prevent and recover from health problems.

Consequently, demands for psychologists in hospitals and medical settings have dramatically increased and clinical health psychology has become one of the most important disciplines in health care, an overview of the main clinical specialties of psychology is given. Medical psychology explore the psychology of health, illness, and recovery. Medical psychology covers abnormal and social psychology, learning, therapy, research methods, the effects of drugs on mental states. Medical psychologists apply scientific psychological findings, psychological theories, and techniques of psychotherapy, cognitive, behavior modification, interpersonal, family, and life-style therapy to improve the



psychological and physical health of the patient. Health psychology (sometimes referred to as medical psychology or behavioral medicine) can be defined as the aggregate of the specific educational, scientific and professional contributions of the discipline of psychology to the promotion and maintenance of health, the prevention and treatment of illness, the identification of etiological and diagnostic correlates of health, illness and related dysfunction, and the improvement of the health care system and health policy formation. Health Psychologists apply psychological research and methods to the prevention and management of disease, the promotion and maintenance of health, the identification of psychological factors that contribute to physical illness, the improvement of the health care system, and the formulation of health policy.

The American Psychological Associations' Division of Health Psychology outlined the objectives of health psychology as understanding the etiology, promotion and maintenance of health, prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of physical and mental illness; the study of psychological, social, emotional and behavioral factors in physical and mental illness; and the improvement of the health care system and formulation of health policy. Thus, health psychologists are interested in how biological, psychological, and social factors affect health and illness. Therefore, they are engaged in the promotion and maintenance of health-related behavior, the prevention and treatment of illness and analysis and improvement of the health care system.

As a profession, psychology is represented in virtually every health care delivery system. Therefore, in state and federal programs and in most communities throughout the United States,

psychologists are recognized as providing needed, valuable and cost effective health services. The USA psychologists, however, are recognized as members of the hospital medical staff with full privileges. They have recently had certain codes on the Current Procedural Technology in order to provide the psychological care (behavioral health assessments and interventions) to patients with physical diagnosis, rather than just mental health diagnosis. Moreover, some United States granted prescription privileges to psychologists to prescribe psychotropic medications. In this direction, military psychologists of the US Department of Defense (DoD) have prescribed psychotropic medications since years. This initial program (prescription privileges for military psychologists) had been thoroughly evaluated by the American governmental bodies such as Vector Research, Inc., the US General Accounting Office, and the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology. The results were that the program has achieved the primary objective for which it was established by demonstrating that licensed psychologists can be trained to provide safe, high-quality cost-effective pharmacological care. Consequently, the National Psychological Associations of United States are asking the legislative authority to enact a bill to grant psychologists prescription privileges after they have undergone specific training program in psychopharmacology. This project is strongly supported by the American Psychological Association that launched a task Force on psychopharmacology to train psychologists as prescribers. In this regard, R. E Kendell, another key figure of psychiatry commented: "...in California, clinical psychologists may well be on the brink of acquiring the right to prescribe antidepressant and neuroleptics, and what happens in

California has a habit happening here (in Britain) 10 years later.

Be that as it may, a huge number of psychologists are opposed to the prescription privilege for psychologists, advocating that psychology needs to remain as separate as possible from psychiatry, and psychologists, as health providers, have evidence-based methods of interventions just as effective as psychotropic medications.

The Renaissance in Central Asia resulted in the greatest achievements in the political, economic and spiritual life of society. During this period, political and legal sciences, new literature and art, medicine, philosophy, and a new aesthetic consciousness were created.<sup>1</sup>

The article examines the most important issues of the formation of the rule of law and civil society in modern Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan has a rich experience of political life, features of political consciousness and develops in unique and difficult conditions. Thus, it turned out that it is wrong to copy a simple copy of the political experience of the Western world.<sup>2</sup>

The paper investigates the essence of spiritual potential as well as its role in modern society.<sup>3</sup>

Founded as a statesman in the history of the Baburi dynasty, he became one of the world's most famous historians with his book "Boburnoma" written in Uzbek.<sup>4</sup>

Until the mid-1960s, the major role for psychologists in treating illness was to assess psychopathology in patients. With the growth of knowledge on the importance of behavioral and psychosocial factors in the etiology and maintenance of dysfunctions, psychologists have developed more expertise in diagnosing and treating the behavioral aspects of illness. Consequently, psychologists have begun to define themselves as health care rather than mental health care providers.

This article has outlined and discussed the clinical role of psychologists in health care delivery as diagnosticians, therapists, academicians, researchers, and administrators in the era of the biopsychosocial practice. The paper, however, is restricted to the management roles of psychologists in medical settings and, does not expose to the psychologists' roles in promoting health and preventing illness. The practice of psychologists in health care delivery requires sophisticated teaching, intensive training, and high professionalism in their attitude to the ethical principles and code of conduct.

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