Psychology of Health

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COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

Health Psychology addresses the psychological factors (cognitive, emotional, psychosocial and behavioural) underlying the health status of individuals as well as disease prevention and curative behaviours. The course aims to teach students about the main issues related to health and disease from a psychological point of view, considering the theoretical and applicative implications in the different contexts of health and disease.

Intended learning outcomes

At the end of the course, students will know the main theoretical models (as outlined in the programme below) about health and illness, as well as the methodological aspects based on dyadic coping styles applied to health promotion and the treatment of diseases.

COURSE CONTENT

In more detail, the course will be divided into the following units:

*Unit 1 -* Representations of health and disease and the implications for well-being:

- concepts of health, illness and care as aspects of the symbolic sphere in society;

- scientific communication and common sense in forming the representation of COVID19.

*Unit 2 -* The link between body and mind:

- body-mind dualism;

- psychosomatic medicine;

- the origin and meaning of somatic symptoms according to the Multiple Code Theory;

- the body's communication according to the thinking of De Toffoli.

*Unit 3 -* Methodological aspects in health and disease research:

- ethical considerations in health psychology research;

- the need to adopt a multi-method research procedure;

- research with patient-caregiver dyads.

*Unit 4 -* Events and lifestyles in relation to health and disease:

- risk factors in disease prevention and health promotion;

- keynotes on the immune system.

*Unit 5 -* The emotional components:

- emotions and health;

- alexithymia and affective regulation;

- psychobiological regulation.

*Unit 6 -* Coping styles and resilience factors:

- coping styles;

- dyadic coping;

- resilience factors.

*Unit 7 -* Psychological support in situations of illness:

- the psychologist and health;

- support for the patient-caregiver dyad.

*Unit 8 -* Family dynamics in oncological disease:

- cancer in the various life stages;

- the bonds that heal.

*Unit 9 -* Health promotion in "total institutions":

- health in hospital;

- health in prisons.

READING LIST

L. Solano (2013), *Tra mente e corpo* (the first 16 chapters), Raffello Cortina Editore.

C. Acquati, E. Saita (2017), *Affrontare insieme la malattia. Il coping diadico tra teoria e pratica*, Carocci Editore.

TEACHING METHOD

Frontal lectures alternating with the involvement of students in the preparation of psychological intervention projects in the contexts of health and illness.

ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA

An oral exam which will assess students' knowledge of the basic notions, as well as their critical and argumentative skill on the various issues addressed during the course. There will be a minimum of three to a maximum of five questions, and students will be assessed on their basic knowledge of the requested topic (to pass [18/30]) they will need to display an ability to explore in depth, know the content accurately, use precise terminology, and identify conceptual links (to attain the highest marks).

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

Students must possess a basic knowledge of the main concepts of dynamic psychology and clinical psychology (for example mind and body bonds, coping style, … )

In case the current Covid-19 health emergency does not allow frontal teaching, remote teaching and assessment will be carried out following procedures that will be promptly notified to students.

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG or on the Faculty notice board.