Expanding horizons of health psychology: Issues and challenges

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Health psychology is one of the most rapidly developing fields in contemporary psychology. It is now the sixth largest among 56 divisions of the American Psychological Association. Health psychology encompasses a wide range of issues — from chronic pain to terminal illness — with the goals of helping people improve their quality of life and addressing specific health issues. Health psychologists are doing a lot of prevention work around a range of issues from preventing obesity, maintaining a positive outlook in life, preventing anxiety and depression and trying to enhance the quality of life of individuals. They work on multidisciplinary teams in integrated care settings including working with physicians, nutritionists, dieticians, and physical therapists. They are trained to know about the disease processes and physiology and how the mind and body can work together on what's going on with a specific illness in order to help that person deal with whatever issues they are being presented with. The issues and challenges for contemporary health psychology are: understanding chronic illness, promoting health and preventing disease and re-shaping the health care system to meet future needs. There are some international issues, such that disease prevalence varies greatly by country. Continuing success in health psychology depends on a strong commitment to trans-disciplinary collaboration; striving for theoretical and research developments that cultivate the multilevel, multisystem, and multivariate nature of health processes, and the development of curriculum and funding policies for the next generation of researchers and practitioners. This keynote address will present all aspects of current issues and challenges of health psychology focusing on recent developments in fundamentals and practical applications

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