

# Psychology and Health: Stability and change

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The first issue of 2011 of *Psychology and Health* marked a transition in the editorship of the journal (see Conner & O'Connor, 2011 for an earlier version of this editorial). For the previous four years the journal had benefited from the experience of Rona Ross-Morris and Lucy Yardley as co-editors-in-chief. They along with their team of associate editors, editorial board members and reviewers took the journal forward to become one of the most prominent health psychology journals in the world. During this period the journal has reached a record impact factor of 2.08 for 2008. This achievement is a testament to the hard work and vision of the previous editors' and their editorial team. *Psychology and Health* is the official journal of the European Health Psychology Society and the society has played an important role in supporting and publicising the journal in this period. In addition, the publishers, Taylor and Francis, also deserve thanks for their work in the running of such a successful journal. Obviously the reputation that *Psychology and Health* now enjoys is not the result of just four years hard work. With this in mind we would also like to express thanks to past editors John Weinman, Ad Kaptein, and Paul Norman and their editorial teams who have made important contributions over the years since its inception in 1987 to the status the journal enjoys. In becoming co-editors-in-chief it is our hope that we too can make a useful contribution to taking *Psychology and Health* forward during our period in office (2011-2014) and to developing it further in terms of international standing, circulation and impact.

## Stability

Our own decision to apply as a team to become co-editors-in-chief was in part driven by how well the previous co-editors-in-chief of *Psychology and Health* had made such a joint arrangement work. The way they and their editorial team have run the journal over the past four years is something we will aspire to replicate in our own term. With this in mind we hope that the transition from the previous to the new editorial team will be seamless. Indeed the first few issues of 2011 (Volume 26) almost exclusively contained articles accepted by the previous editorial team. Another aspect of stability during the transition is the large proportion of the associate editors from the previous editorial team that have agreed to stay on during our editorial 'term of office'. We look forward to working with and learning from such an experienced team over the next few years at *Psychology and Health*.

We hope that the journal will remain a highly respected outlet for the best quality theoretical and empirical work in the health psychology domain as well as publishing new and critical approaches. With the steadily increasing number of submissions the pressure on journal space will continue to grow despite *Psychology and Health* moving to 12 issues per year in 2011. Although this inevitably increases the workload of the editorial team it also provides an opportunity to further drive up the quality of the work published in the journal and as a consequence increase the status of the journal. We hope that authors will continue to submit their very best work to *Psychology and Health* whatever area of

health psychology the work falls in and that the journal becomes the first “port of call” for research excellence. The journal will continue to publish high quality work on the role of psychological factors in health and illness, including psychological aspects of the etiology, experience and treatment of health and illness, health cognitions and behaviour, the interface between individuals and health care systems, randomised controlled trials of public health and clinical health psychology interventions, and other areas of health psychology. Not only do we welcome submissions across this wide range of topics, we also welcome a range of methodological approaches to research. We would particularly welcome submissions from researchers working in areas that have to date received less attention in the pages of *Psychology and Health*. For example, work on psychobiological processes of health and illness such as psychoneuroimmunology is something we would like to see more of in the journal. Building on the work of the outgoing co-editors-in-chief, we plan to continue to invite Guest Editorials by world leading health psychologists on advances in the field of health psychology and behavioural medicine. We also encourage researchers to approach us to discuss ideas for future special issues on important and emerging areas of research. As under previous editorial teams the key criterion for publication in *Psychology and Health* remains the quality of the work.

## Change

In addition to ensuring the stability of the journal during the transition to the new editorial team we also have introduced a number of changes. The most obvious one will be the change to a structured abstract. A number of key journals in health psychology and behavioural medicine have switched to using such abstracts and it is our belief that when appropriately used they can be an aid to rapid and clear

understanding of the research being reported. The primary headings for the structured abstracts will be: Objective, Design, Main Outcome Measures, Results, Conclusion. As a consequence the word limit for the abstract will also increase from 200 words to 250 words. A second change will be less obvious but we believe will be crucial to maintaining and increasing the status of the journal. We plan to work with our editorial team and publishers with the aim of further reducing the time between submission and publication. We will aim to reduce the time taken to reach an editorial decision on a manuscript, the time taken between acceptance and the appearance of online first publications (which will include a citable Digital Object Identifier [DOI]), and the time between an article appearing online and appearing in print in the journal. This will be a difficult task but one we believe is essential if the journal is to continue to compete with the very best journals in the area in providing a rapid outlet for the latest advances in health psychology.

## 2011 Issues

*Psychology and Health* published a total of 12 issues plus a special issue in 2011 reflecting the high number of quality articles we receive. In addition to a large number of high quality regular articles we published one special issue and two themed issues. Special issues are guest edited by key researchers in an area and involve a specific call for papers on this issue. The special issue in 2011 (volume 26, issue 2) was edited by Charles Abraham and Blair Johnson on ‘Health Promotion Interventions (Abraham & Johnson, 2011) and contained articles on changing health behaviours such as physical activity, school-based diet, condom use and promoting the health of pregnant women. We plan for *Psychology and Health* to publish one special issue each year and are happy to receive proposals for the content of these special issues.

Themed issues bring together sets of regular articles accepted for publication in the journal and group them together in a single issue along with an editorial from key researchers in that area. The first themed issue of 2011 (volume 26, issue 9) was on Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behaviour (TPB) and its application to health behaviours. This themed issue brought together 8 articles on different aspects of the TPB. The editorial (Ajzen, 2011) by the developer of the theory, Icek Ajzen, provided an overview and critique of these articles along with a number of insightful comments on research in this area. This themed issue was also timed to coincide with the publication of a major meta-analysis of the TPB (McEachan, Conner, Taylor, & Lawton, 2011) in the September issue of *Health Psychology Review* (the other journal of the European Health Psychology Society; EHPS). Together these 'cross-over' issues of the two EHPS journals make an important contribution to research on the TPB and health behaviours. The second themed issue of 2011 (volume 26, part-issue 11) was on measures of self-rated health. This is an important an emerging topic in health psychology. The themed issue brought together 4 articles on this issue along with an editorial from Yael Benyamini who is a key researcher in this area and also an Associate Editor at *Psychology and Health*. Benyamini (2011) uses these 4 articles plus a number of others (a majority of which have been published in *Psychology and Health*) to discuss different explanations of why self-rated health is such a good predictor of future health outcomes. We expect the themed issue to prompt further research in this area. Further themed issues of *Psychology and Health* are planned for 2012.

### Summary

In summary, we are proud to continue the traditions of *Psychology and Health* and look forward to working with our editorial team, with authors and with readers to further develop the

journal. The journal is already one of the top journals in health psychology, over the period of our editorship (2011-2014) we will work hard to consolidate and where possible improve on the international standing of the journal. ■

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