

Health Psychology International



Japanese journals in Health Psychology

Health psychology in Japan: Collective construction of a discipline

The Japanese Association of Health Psychology

The main actor of health psychology in Japan is the Japanese Association of Health Psychology (JAHP), founded in 1988. Its members are rapidly increasing - from 145 in 1988 to 2144 in 2004, showing evidence of development of health psychology in Japan. Today health psychology is recognized as an important sub-disciplines of psychology. Before 1988, few Japanese psychologists mentioned the term 'health psychology', although there had been research and practices on stress, cultural and economic factors in anti-social and unsocial behaviour, attitudes towards health and medical treatment, human relations in medical settings, and so on. Health psychology was not a newcomer from North-America, yet a framework into which research findings were to be systematized was lacking at that time.

JAHP and Medical Behavioural Science

In 1987, the president of Japanese Psychological Association, Dr Motoaki met with the president of the International Union of Psychological Science, Dr Holtzmann when they were invited to China. Dr. Holtzman suggested Dr Motoaki to introduce health psychology into Japan. Knowing about the rapid growth and success of health psychology in North America, Dr. Motoaki and his associates rushed to establish an institution. But health psychology had already been introduced by social psychologist as a new trend in North America in early 1980s, and researches on health-related concepts of Japanese people had been started by social psychologist. The founding members of JAHP invited the social psychologists to join the Association, as a pioneer of this new disciple in Japan.

Medical behavioural science is a closely related field that exists in parallel. Years ago, some medical doctors already recognized the significance of psychological factors operating in medical settings. The journal '*Education and Medicine (1953)*' has played a great role in encouraging the promotion of psychological perspectives to treat illness-related problems for more than half a century. This field has its own academic societies and plays an important role in medical settings.

Consolidation of foundation: Invention of devices

In its early days, stabilizing the foundation of JAHP was the prime issue since even the core members of JAHP sometimes assumed that the main aim of health psychology was the promotion of mental health. Around 1990 medical behavioural scientists undertook research of health related behaviour. JAHP started to publish two official journals, '*Japanese Journal of Health Psychology (1988)*' in Japanese and '*Japanese Health Psychology (1992)*' in English. The core members translated some English language literature on health psychology into Japanese. In 1993 the International Health Psychology Conference was held in Tokyo, inviting distinguished western health psychologists. Following this conference, the International Society of Health Psychology Research was founded. JAHP published '*The Dictionary of Health Psychology*' in 1997 and more recently, a 4-volumed introductory textbook. JAHP started accreditation of

‘qualified health psychologist’ in 1996. In 1998 it started to grant the Motoaki award for young psychologists, which is conferred to the author of the most excellent paper of the year published in its official journals. In the same year, JAHP founded the Health Psychology Centre for Education and Practice. The Asian Society of Health Psychology was found in 2000, following the 2000 Asian Congress of Health Psychology in Tokyo. These devices invented by JAHP did a lot to institutionalise health psychology and to stabilize the status of JAHP both in academe and in the society.

Original contributions from a Japanese cultural perspective began to appear in late 1990s. ‘*Health Psychological Study on Anxiety-Reduction Effect of Meditation (Sakairi,1999)*’ and ‘*Health Psychological Study of the Festival, Takachiho-Yokagura: The Health Care System of God and Human (Fukushima,2003)*’ are fine examples

Rise of clinical psychology and prospects for the future

In Japan, clinical psychologists succeeded in establishing their status as a profession for treating mental health problems with the accreditation of the Certified Clinical Psychologist, CCP, and the introduction of the Qualified Graduate Course for CCP in late 1990s. Today, clinical psychology has widely prevailed into various sectors of society to treat psychology-related problems such as juvenile delinquency, depressive, suicide, child abuse, social withdrawal that have increased since 1990s. Governmental authorities strongly promote clinical psychology to deal with these problems. People came to accept and use discourses clinical psychologists provide. In late 1990s, clinical psychology has emerged as a significant agent of ‘technology of subjectivity’ in Japanese society.

Compared to this, Health psychology is only a minor actor in both academe and society. But there are signs that health psychology is beginning to enter into health administration. In Japan, the rapid increase of health expenditure is a serious problem with aging of the population in extremely rapid pace. Lifestyle-related diseases are now the most significant killer. The Health Promotion Law of 2002 aims to prevent illness by promoting healthy lifestyle through health-education which aims at changing lifestyles related to smoking, drinking alcohol, salt intake, daily physical exercise, stress management and so on. Some health psychologists play an important role in planning and implementing such policies. Health psychology is beginning to have a direct influence on a wide spectrum of Japanese people. The role of health psychology will become more important in near future.

Yasuhiro Igarashi

Department of Aesthetics and Health Sciences, Yamano College of Aesthetics
530 Yarimizu, Hachioji-shi, Tokyo 192-0396, JAPAN
(E-mail: veh03661@nifty.ne.jp)