

Official Newsletter

Introducing The PsySSA HPSIG

By: Dr Rizwana Roomaney

The Health Psychology special interest group (SIG) was given the go-ahead in November 2019 and has since gained momentum, despite the challenges that 2020 has bought us.

The aim of the SIG is to create a space where researchers, academics, clinicians, students, and anyone interested in health psychology can share their work and experiences, build collaborations, and ultimately contribute to building a health nation. The SIG is open to and values diverse approaches in health psychology.

Currently, the SIG consists of three working groups, each with their own goals, leaders and committee members. These groups deal with research, news and events. In the coming months you can expect to hear more about what each group has been planning as we begin forming a community of health psychologists. The SIG will officially launch at the national PSYSSA conference in 2021.

IN THIS ISSUE

PAGE 1 INTRODUCING THE PSYSSA HPSIG GROUPS



PAGE 4 BREAST CANCER AWARENESS



PAGE 5 CONTACT DETAILS AND ADDITIONAL READS





HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY
SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

Introducing The Special Interest Research Working Group

By: *Lodewyk Vogel*



Health Psychology has a critical role to play in the lives of South African citizens. To fully understand the contribution that the discipline can provide to the broader healthcare system, it is important to critically evaluate how clinical-, public-, community- and critical health psychology has progressed over recent years.

The special interest research group aims to produce research on health psychology as a discipline in South Africa as well as to provide cognizance of how psychologists, allied healthcare professionals and other community workers implement health psychology principles and theorems in daily practice. As the discipline of health psychology is ever-evolving and takes on unique characteristics in a varied socio-economic landscape like South Africa, it is paramount to not only evaluate but to provide recommendations on the direction that the discipline could take to uplift our nation.

To achieve this, the group has committed itself to several research endeavours to contribute to the cause. The group consists of Professor Ashraf Kagee, Dr Bronwynè Coetzee, Dr Rizwana Roomaney, Susan Saunders, Courtney Field and Lodewyk Vogel as group lead.



HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY
SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

Introducing The News and Media Working Group

By: Meghan Mosalisa



Information sharing is an integral part of awareness, the primary objective of the News and Media portfolio is providing a platform where health psychology events and research can be properly accessed. This will aid in sharing the excitement around the field of health psychology as well as promoting a better understanding within the field of health psychology.

This Health Psychology special interest group is focused on bringing awareness to important health topics as well as serving as a platform to advertise and communicate different events and significant milestones. Social media platforms and a News and Media Newsletter will be the main forms of communication as these are the most accessible to all.

The News and Media team is both enthusiastic and excited in its role to make these media outlets accessible and its content thought-provoking.



HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY
SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

Introducing The Events Working Group

By: Laura Hartman



The Health Psychology SIG Events working group aims to use our platform to encourage wider public engagement with health psychology. To do this, we are hoping to host a number of virtual and in person events focussed on a number of relevant areas of health research. We believe that making health and wellness information more accessible will allow all to take an active role in their own well-being and help empower those directly and indirectly affected by illness.

In line with Breast Cancer Awareness month, we are currently developing a podcast series focussed on breast cancer research. One of our team members is also set to appear on Valley FM to speak about Health Psychology and its relevance in South Africa.

We have lots of great ideas but in order to run with them we are also looking to expand our team. If you are interested in joining the Events working group, please send an email to 18960324@sun.ac.za

Health Psychology Article

The Role of Psychologists in Breast Cancer Prevention and Treatment

By: Corinne Crawford



Breast Cancer Awareness Month is marked in countries across the world every October. While this places the focus on women reducing their cancer risk during this time, everyone should be encouraged to make their health a priority all year round, and to be aware of signs or symptoms of being unwell.

We are living in unprecedented times with COVID-19 taking center stage in our lives, however, the CANSA foundation reminds us that the cancer risk does not go away due to the pandemic, and women still need to go for regular cancer screening as seeking treatment early saves lives (CANSA, 2020).

Delays in seeking treatment of as little as three months can adversely affect survival (Bish, Ramirez, Burgess, & Hunter, 2005). Local studies indicate several factors that contribute to delayed health seeking behaviour among patients with cancer. These include the distance to local clinics and hospitals, cost of transportation, long wait times, overcrowding, a lack of psychosocial support and a fear of diagnosis and treatment (Lambert, et al., 2020).



Understanding these barriers allow health professionals such as psychologists to understand the reasons for delayed help-seeking behaviour and may inform interventions aimed at behaviour change.

Psychologists may also play a supportive role for patients experiencing cancer. Patients may experience significant distress due to the life-threatening and life-altering nature of breast cancer. At least a third of women diagnosed with breast cancer at a hospital in the Western Cape met the criteria for clinical distress.

Furthermore, bodily changes that accompany cancer treatment and perceived social support were identified as significant predictors of distress (Kagee, Roomaney, & Knoll, 2018). South Africa needs dedicated psychosocial services supporting breast cancer patients.

Other local research has identified coping strategies used by South African female breast cancer survivors. These include reappraisal (for example normalising experiences, and positive self-talk), acceptance, relinquishing control, and benefit finding. (Roomaney, Gallagher-Squires, & Kagee, 2020).

Religion and spirituality also play a role in the patients' coping, adjustment, and acceptance of a breast cancer diagnosis (Coetzee, Roomaney, Smith, & Daniels, 2020).

The need for psychosocial intervention for breast cancer patients and survivors of breast cancer is just as critical as the need for medical intervention. It is an area where Health Psychologists may play a vital role as part of a holistic approach to breast cancer care.

References

- Bish, A., Ramirez, A., Burgess, C. C., & Hunter, M. S. (2005). Understanding why women delay in seeking help for breast cancer. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 321-6.
- CANSA. (2020). Retrieved from <https://cansa.org.za/womens-health/>
- Coetzee, B., Roomaney, R., Smith, P., & Daniels, J. (2020). Exploring Breast Cancer Diagnosis and Treatment Experience Among a Sample of South African Women Who Access Primary Health Care. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 50(2), 195-206. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0081246319870410>.
- Kagee, A., Roomaney, R., & Knoll, N. (2018). Psychological Predictors of Distress and Depression among South African Breast Cancer Patients. *Psycho-Oncology*, 27, 908-914 <https://doi.org/10.1002/pon.4589>.
- Lambert, M., Medenhall, E., Kim, A., Cubasch, H., Joffe, M., & Norris, S. (2020). Health System Experiences of Breast Cancer Survivors in Urban South Africa. *Women's Health*, 16, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1745506520949419>.
- Roomaney, R., Gallagher-Squires, C., & Kagee, A. (2020). Cognitive Coping Strategies of South African Women in Breast Cancer Care. *South African Journal of Psychology*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0081246320961761>.