

Invited Symposium:
Health and well-being in the digital era: Socio-ecological perspectives

Organizers: Márta Csabai and Tamás Martos (Institute of Psychology, University of Szeged, Hungary)

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1.

The Care System Approach to Well-being: Giving Voice to Patients, Caregivers and Health Professionals

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It was April 6 1948 when the WHO formalized the current definition of health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Over the last 70 years an impressive amount of theoretical and research efforts has been invested in the development and implementation of this definition. Four major advancements were achieved: (1) A paradigm shift from the bio-medical view of human functioning towards a bio-psycho-social, person-centered model; (2) A comprehensive map of ill-being and well-being dimensions contextualized in the manifold human life domains, including health; (3) A broadening of attention to all the characters involved in the care system, based on the acknowledgement of the interconnections among patients', caregivers' and health professionals' psychophysical health; (4) An increase in the studies adopting a mixed method

approach, that allows for a deeper understanding of individuals' needs and resources, in line with the person-centered model.

Based on these achievements, the major challenge currently faced by researchers and practitioners is the integration of all these aspects into a unified model of health, guiding the development of virtuous care systems. Our presentation illustrates a research and clinical approach developed to meet this challenge by the Care System Group, a research team comprising psychologists and physicians from nine centers in Northern, Central and Southern Italy. This approach was operationalized through two subsequent projects, supported by the Italian Multiple Sclerosis Foundation (FISM), and involving persons with multiple sclerosis (PwMS), their caregivers and health professionals. Major findings obtained from the pilot project conducted in 2011 will be first presented [1-3], followed by preliminary results from the main 3-year project (2015-2018), derived from the application of Leventhal's Common Sense Model to the experience of PwMS. Overall, these findings suggest the potential of an integrated approach to health in revealing the coexistence of illness and ill-being with psychological and contextual resources, which can counterbalance health-related constraints and foster the construction of a balanced and harmonious life. Discussion will focus on the current attempts to translate research findings into clinical practice. As illness exacts a heavy price from individuals, families, healthcare systems and societies as a whole, well-being promotion can benefit individuals in their process of adjustment to chronic conditions, as well as societies through the implementation of economically sustainable healthcare strategies. Moreover, findings obtained in the domain of multiple sclerosis can represent a touchstone for addressing the challenges posed by other chronic illnesses.

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