

Original Papers

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*Helena Wrona-Polańska**
*Ewa Gruszczyńska***

Special Issue of „Polish Psychological Bulletin”: Health, stress and coping

Stress is a key concept in health psychology. The Lazarus and Folkman (1984) theory provided a sound theoretical framework regarded as a golden standard for research in this area. The theory foundations are strong enough to accommodate new ideas, even those questioning its basic assumptions due to progress in the knowledge of affective aspects of appraisal and coping. For example, the relationship between emotion and cognition is now described as mutual and complex, where both these components may play the roles of cause and effect. Fredrickson (1998) in her broaden-and-built theory of positive emotions showed how positive emotions can promote activities that, over time, restore and create health-related resources. Also Folkman (1997) modified the model by introducing a third function of coping processes: namely, meaning-oriented strategies aimed at creating and maintaining positive emotional states during stressful situations, substantially different not only from problem-focused, but also from emotion-focused coping. The latter has been found in numerous studies to correlate with negative emotional states which, at least partially, can be explained by a measurement overlap. Thus, effective emotion regulation under stress and its connection with different health outcomes remain still an open question.

The present special issue of the Polish Psychological Bulletin focused on exploring this area between old and new consists of five papers. In each article the leading idea, although well-rooted in health psychology, turned out to require a new reflection in terms of either theory or method.

The aim of the study by Wrona-Polańska was to investigate the function of stress in patients after bone marrow transplantation (BMT) and their health predictors. The theoretical rationale was the author's Functional Model of Health (FMH), where health is construed as a function of creative coping with stress. Health status was

operationalized using 10-point self-rating scales to assess the patients' perceived health and sense of calmness, while their objective health was rated by a medical expert - hematologist. Correlation analyses revealed strong negative associations between stress and the patients' subjective health, but no relationship between stress and their objective health status. The relatively high level of objective health as compared to the patients' self-rated health may be indicative of effectiveness of this treatment method in patients with blood cancers. Their subjective perception, or feeling healthy, depends on their individual resources and on engaging in health-promoting activities. Subjective health predictors of leukemia patients turned out to be: objective health and the patient's sense of meaningfulness. Therefore, stress fulfills an important regulatory role, as a signal of threat warning the patient about possible loss of health and life.

In the paper by Gruszczyńska, Kwissa-Gajewska and Kroemeke a person-specific approach to data analysis was adopted to explore heterogeneity of reaction to insulin therapy initiation among type-2 diabetes patients. This method of data analysis has been relatively recently used in health psychology, in spite of the fundamental assumption that individual differences in the *process* of adaptation are inevitable. Therefore, they are rather normative than exceptional. Among the type-2 diabetes patients (N = 305) the largest subgroup showed a threat response to treatment change, but they constituted only 57% of the sample. Emotional responses of the others were described by different combinations of positive and negative affect trajectories. Thus, the findings indicate the need for targeted interventions to effectively support patients' adjustment to the new treatment routine. Taking into account an epidemiological trend in type-2 diabetes (Ogurtsova et al., 2017), clinical importance of these results seems significant.

* Pedagogical University of Cracow, Poland; President of the Health Psychology Section of the Polish Psychological Association

** SWPS University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Warsaw, Poland; National Delegate in the European Health Psychology Society

The study by Włodarczyk is a continuation of the work started by Professor Kazimierz Wrześniewski on factors contributing to patient adaptation after a heart attack. The paper deals with the role of trait curiosity (C-trait) in coping and quality of life among myocardial infarction patients. The findings showed that the dynamics of some coping strategies after myocardial infarction was moderated by trait curiosity, however, C-trait did not affect accordingly either the disease-specific or generic quality of life. The hypothesis that curiosity may be a personality antecedent of coping with life-threatening cardiac event is not straightforward, but this idea is concordant with the research approach seeking other than pathologically-rooted correlates of health and disease.

Nowaczyk and Cierpialkowska investigated whether perception of the importance, gain and loss of resources differentiates between multiple sclerosis patients with longer or shorter disease duration. Interestingly, patients with a longer history of multiple sclerosis considered all resources, especially those vital and spiritual, as more important. The finding cannot be explained by a greater resource loss, since their loss was rated as *lower* than that in the subgroup of patients with a history of illness no longer than 4 years. No differences with regard to resource gain were noted. As assumed in the Conservation of Resources Theory by Hobfoll (1998), resource loss is probably crucial for patients' subjective well-being, thus these results can inform counseling practice. Also, the findings point to a significant role of the resource importance evaluation. Currently unavailable resources may be valued higher. Perhaps in the context of chronic disease such evaluations may have a compensatory character and should not be confused with adaptation or growth. The findings seem to provide a theoretically promising starting point for further research.

Ziarko, Rosińska and Sieński using cross-section data across time approach examined how social changes after Poland's accession to the European Union affected health-related lifestyle among young adults. Although the aggregated indices of (un)healthy lifestyle did not differ between the 2003- and 2013-groups, significant changes were noted for specific health-related behavioral, emotional and cognitive activities. Interestingly, self-reported healthy diet, physical activity, engagement in leisure time activities and preventive medical examinations were higher in 2013, whereas hygiene, substance use, palliative coping and knowledge about health were lower than in the similar age group a decade ago. Additionally, in the 2013-group a biomedical model of health turned

out to “replace” a holistic health model among significant predictors of health-related lifestyle. When looking at shifts in the lifestyle profile, it must be said that this unexpected medicalization of health perception among healthy young adults seems to be functional. However, further longitudinal and cross-sectional comparisons are needed to verify how strongly this effect is age- or context-variant (Vollrath, 2006).

Last but not least, the issue is published to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Health Psychology Section of the Polish Psychological Association. A quarter of century ago both Poland and the world were in totally different places than today in terms of political, social and technological processes. It is enough to mention, albeit hard to believe, that in 1991 when the Internet was made available to commercial use, around 1 million users were in the web. In 2017 almost half of the world population, i.e. 3.7 billion of people have access to the Internet (InternetWorldStat, 2017). Naturally, it has become a major source of health-related information, especially for young people (Fernández-Luque, & Bau, 2015).

We are already living longer, but not necessarily healthier (Eurostat, 2017). In spite of all the scientific efforts many of the old questions remain unanswered, while new challenges have appeared. With the 25 years of history behind us we are ready for what may come.

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