

SUBJECT:	<b>PSYCHOLOGICAL BASES OF HEALTH AND ILLNESS</b>		
CREDITS:	Total: <input type="text" value="7"/>	Theory: <input type="text" value="4"/>	Practical: <input type="text" value="3"/>

## GENERAL OBJECTIVES

### Course content

The acquisition of knowledge essential to any prospective doctor for understanding and explaining the inherent psychological processes involved in health, illness and doctor-patient interaction.

To achieve this general objective, students will learn to:

- Apply the principles and methods of psychology to the study of interaction between the individual and the socially constructed environment. Integrate knowledge of the other fundamental medical sciences at an appropriate level of complexity for the object of study.
- Apply the principles and methods of psychology to the study of normal behaviour, following organizational criteria based on habits and lifestyles. Apply this knowledge to the fields of therapeutics and prevention, health maintenance and the rehabilitation of chronic illnesses.
- Understand the healthy or sick individual as the result of interaction between psychological and strictly biological variables. Understand the cost of disease and treatments in terms of their effect on patient habits and quality of life.
- Acquire strategies and skills for obtaining information from patients and other healthcare professionals beyond simple pathological information, paying special attention to adaptive resources and problem solving.
- Acquire strategies and skills for designing participation programmes for those aspects of medical treatment that require patient collaboration and the modification of their habits and lifestyle.

### Teaching

The subject is designed to be an open, functional programme, focused on student activity and participation.

- "*Open programme*" means that consideration will be given to all other forms of training, both current (from the bibliography and informal learning) and future (through clinical experience, observation of experts and professional practice). Teaching is intended to provide students with the tools and knowledge to optimize the efficiency of these training sources.
- "*Functional programme*" means that the principle aim of the teaching programme is the use and application of the knowledge acquired, with consideration given to concepts that must be learned as reasoning tools. For a concept to be functional it must be applied. With this in mind, the most important aspect of the teaching programme is its focus on the practical application of course content.
- Teaching is based on self motivation and active student participation both individually and in groups, through discussion and team work, as well as student involvement in the training process as monitors or *peer tutors*.

The specific learning objectives for each topic are presented as questions or study guides at the beginning of each chapter.

## PROGRAMME

### Introduction

1. Epistemological bases of Psychology. Natural Psychology and Scientific Psychology.
2. Models used in Psychology. Internal, external and interaction models. Object of study of Medical Psychology.
3. Methodological tools for assessing evidence. Internal validity and refutation of alternative hypotheses. External validity and conditions of generalization.

### Processes of acquiring intermediaries and information

4. Conditioning and learning. Respondent and operant conditioning. Complex learning processes based on control of stimuli: learning through observation and instruction.
5. Memory processes. Classification according to the information to be remembered. Relevance to medical psychology: factors that influence patient information recall, procedures for helping patients to remember prescriptions.
6. Methods for obtaining information. The distinction between information content and procedures. Self reports. Self records. Direct observation in the natural environment and the analogous environment.
7. Therapeutic programs and psychological components of medical treatments. The distinction between treatment and therapeutic program. Procedures for treating anxiety disorders.

### Normal behaviour

8. Adaptive habits and lifestyles. Training and modification of adaptive habits. Relevance to medical psychology

### The process of falling ill

9. The process of falling ill. Concepts of *health* and *illness*. Analysis of the concept of *psychosomatic illness*. Patient conduct when falling ill and how to recognize it.
10. Stress and adaptation. Illness as a source of stress. Acute and chronic illness.

### The doctor-patient relationship

11. Doctor-patient communication. The diagnostic process.
12. Hospitalization.
13. Fulfilling therapy prescriptions. Common forms of nonfulfilment. Procedures for detecting fulfilment of prescriptions. Strategies for improving fulfilment.
14. The placebo effect. The placebo in therapeutic research. The placebo in clinical practice.

### Integration of subject areas.

15. Chronic pain and functional limitations. Differences between acute and chronic pain.

## ASSESSMENT

### Content

Students will be assessed on all knowledge and skills corresponding to the contents of the teaching programme, which have been selected to represent the basic concepts involved.

### Procedures

Final assessment will consist of 5 problems or applied activities set as open questions of the type used during the course.

### Assessment criteria

The followed skills will be appraised:

- ordered and schematic application of the appropriate theoretical content of the course to the problems set
- relation of the contents of different topics
- theoretical justification of the cases and problems set
- the ability to distinguish inferences from the data
- the use of criteria to produce answers and the ability to express the conditions through which procedures or principles are applied.

## Marking criteria

Each answer will receive one of the following valuations: 0 = incorrect; A = unsatisfactory; B = correct; C = good; D = excellent.

A correct answer (valuation B) will contain the following elements:

- schematic reference to the theoretical aspects (or concepts) relevant to the problem
- analysis of the particular characteristics of the case presented
- application of theoretical aspects to the solution given, indicating how these have been applied to the procedures used

A pass will be awarded provided that at least three of the five problems are correctly resolved.

The award of marks *good* and *excellent* is based on the evaluation criteria.

## Review process

In the review students will be able to read their exam script with the teacher's corrections and notes and the assessment criteria followed in the correction and marking of the exam. Any doubts and final clarifications will be dealt with by the teaching staff.

## LEARNING RESOURCES AND TEACHING METHODOLOGIES

To aid the learning process, students will be provided with the following resources.

### 1. Explanations in class

Class explanations are not intended to cover all aspects of the course content but rather give an idea of the structure and organization of those points that have proved to be sources of error or confusion in past courses.

### 2. Course manual of text book

The manual or text book will act as reference material and corresponds to the content of the course objectives. Its principal aim is to provide a means of self-learning so that students do not rely entirely on the presence of the teacher and the explanations given.

Each chapter is divided into three parts: the objectives of the chapter, presented as questions or study guides, the information students are required to learn and applied activities. Through applied activities students will be able to put into practice the knowledge acquired. These activities will consist of problems that require the application of theoretical concepts to specific cases. The problems have two objectives: to reveal the extent to which students have assimilated the main course concepts and to provide a means of generalizing the knowledge and reasoning powers acquired through tackling and solving future professional situations

Although each student will benefit most from the type of study that most closely corresponds to their learning style, experience has shown that the most effective means of using the text book is the following:

- 1 Try to answer the questions in the study guide before reading the corresponding chapter. Reading the text thus becomes an active process through which students look for the information required to solve the questions set.
- 2 Having read the chapter, students should then carry out the applied activities as if they were exam questions. This will entail following a line of reasoning that can be considered a balance between *political discourse* and a step-by-step *kitchen recipe*. To avoid producing the latter, students must indicate the theoretical aspects applied to each case or problem. To avoid the generalizations of *political discourse* students must analyse the particular characteristics of the case and make clear how they have applied theoretical principles (see the marking criteria).

### 3. Electronic subject dossier

The electronic subject dossier contains all of the transparencies and diagrams used in class explanations. In the future the dossier will also contain self-assessment questions.

### 4. (T1 Group) Group work, supervised and directed by student-monitors

Group work will be directed and supervised by a member of the group who acts as a monitor and has received training for the task. From the third topic onwards (*Memory processes*), each topic will be studied in 4 sessions as follows:

The class is divided into 8 groups and each member is responsible for monitoring one topic. The monitors study the topic in the course text and resolve the applied activities individually. The solutions are then shared and a general consensus is reached which is presented to the teacher before the topic is explained in class. The

following day the monitors have a session with the teacher. This session is used to discuss the answers and suggests guidelines on how to carry out the group session.

The group work is carried out on the 3rd and 4th day of the topic, directed by the monitor and supervised by the teacher. These sessions will be used to carry out the applied activities of the topic that the group members must prepare in advance.

Group work is not intended as a learning exercise but is meant to consolidate the knowledge already acquired. Group work is an invaluable resource for consolidating the learning process, since solid, coherent arguments can only be used in discussion of an in-depth study of the corresponding topic. Debate and discussion provide an atmosphere in which different points of view, different methods of reasoning and different approaches to a single case can be shared and contrasted; the same can then be applied to the conditions governing the validity of each approach. This is always a useful exercise is problems such as those covered in the course and in medicine in general: complex, disjointed problems that never have a single or definitive correct answer.

Each group is also assigned a coordinator who is responsible for communication with the teaching staff, absent students and those repeating the course.