



**МЕДИЦИНСКИ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ – СОФИЯ**  
*Medical University - Sofia*  
**МЕДИЦИНСКИ ФАКУЛТЕТ**  
*Faculty of Medicine – Deans’s Office*

**MEDICAL PSYCHOLOGY CURRICULUM**

**Approved by:**  
**Corresp. Member of BAS Prof. I. Mitov, MD, PhD, DMSc**  
**Dean of the Medical Faculty at**  
**the Medical University- Sofia**

**The curriculum has been adopted at the meeting of the Faculty Council.....**

Academic discipline:	<b>MEDICAL PSYCHOLOGY</b>
Degree programme:	<b>MEDICINE</b>
Educational-qualification degree:	<b>MASTER</b>
Type of discipline in accordance with the Uniform State Requirements/ Curriculum:	<b>COMPULSORY</b>
Course of study:	<b>III</b>
Exam:	<b>YES</b>
Total number of hours of auditorium workload:	<b>30 academic hours</b>
Lectures:	<b>15 academic hours</b>
Practical exercises:	<b>15 academic hours</b>
Department:	<b>PSYCHIATRY AND MEDICAL PSYCHOLOGY</b>
Training bases:	<b>University Multiprofile Hospital for Active Treatment “Alexandrovska”</b> <b>Multiprofile Hospital for Active Treatment in Neurology and Psychiatry “St. Naum”</b>

**CURRICULUM**

DISCIPLINE	Course of study	HOURS			breakdown by course of study					
		Total	Lectures	Seminars	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
<b>MEDICAL PSYCHOLOGY</b>	<b>III</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	--	--	1/1	--	--	--

## **1. Annotation of the academic discipline**

Medical Psychology is a branch of psychology focused on the application of psychological principles to the practice of medicine. The subject of medical psychology refers to the ways in which biological, psychological and social factors interact to influence health. Medical psychology explores: the various reactions of an individual in health and illness, behavior patterns of doctors and patients, knowledge and skills for enhancing doctor-patient relationships.

## **2. Main tasks of the study programme**

Creating opportunities for students to gain psychological competence in order to complement their specialized, core medical knowledge. Students are expected to develop a holistic view of the patient, a long-lasting interest in the psychosocial and behavioral aspects of illness and health, as well as to acquire basic knowledge and skills to build professional therapeutic relationships with patients.

**Format:** lectures (PPT) and seminars (interactive training methods included: individual work with questionnaires and tests, discussions and brainstorming, case studies, role-play scenarios, reflection on subjective experiences, etc.).

## **3. Expected outcomes**

Students should acquire basic knowledge and skills in medical psychology in terms of: doctor-patient relationships, interviewing techniques and communication within the medical context; the importance of life stages and personality characteristics to illness and stress resistance; bio-psycho-social model - needs assessment and individual care planning within the medical practice.

### **3.1. Amount of acquired theoretical knowledge**

Basic knowledge of the doctor-patient relationship; personality reactions in health and illness; theories of mental development; theories of stress and the consequences of psycho-traumatic experiences on psychic functional operations; interview components, mourning response and ethical principles; bio-psycho-social model in medical care.

### **3.2. Acquired practical skills**

Knowledge of developmental stages and specifications related to each stage; abilities to recognize and overcome resistance to treatment; information on transference and countertransference in doctor-patient relationships and the adoption of a partnership model of interaction; recognizing different types of violence, their effects on the psyche and methods for dealing with patients who have experienced psychotrauma; conducting interviews and learning the basic rules of good communication; practical knowledge and skills for needs assessment and individual care planning within the medical context.

## **4. Thematic unit plan for lectures and seminars**

### **4.1. Lectures - 30 academic hours**

#### **Lecture №1: Characteristics of the doctor-patient relationship**

Nature of the positive doctor-patient interaction; Different models of Doctor-Patient Relationship (DPR): Paternalism, Consumerism, Partnership; Underlying processes in DPR: Resistance & Defense Mechanisms.

#### **Lecture №2: Strengthening therapeutic alliance**

Elements of the positive doctor-patient relationship. Strengthening therapeutic alliance and adherence to treatment. Basic skills & techniques for maintain therapeutic relationships; Best-practice recommendations.

**Lecture №3: Communication: definition, theories and types**

Definition for health communication; Intended outcomes of health communication; Types of communication: verbal & nonverbal; Perception, attribution, attitude.

**Lecture №4: Levels of communication. Communication in different cultures.**

Levels of communication: content, procedure, interactions, feelings; Cultural aspects of communication, relevant to the medical situation.

**Lecture №5: Theories of Psychological Development**

Principles of Psychological Development across the Lifespan, Psychoanalytic ideas of Development (S. Freud); Behaviorism, Cognitive Psychology.

**Lecture №6: Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development**

The "life-cycle" perspective of psychological development; Age-related crisis and development goals (positive and negative outcomes); the 8 stages of Psychological Development.

**Lecture №7: Personality**

Significance of personality factors for the clinical practice; The concept of health behavior. Behavior in illness; Conceptual differentiation: personality, temperament, character.

**Lecture №8: Theories for personality and psychological reactions to illness.**

Psychoanalytic theory; Trait-specific dimensions of personality; Humanistic perspective (A. Maslow); Social-Cognitive Theories.

**Lecture №9: Stress and coping**

Definition & Types of stress; Phases and symptoms of stress; Hans Selye's model of Stress; Stress & Coping: adaptive and maladaptive strategies; Stress and illness.

**Lecture №10: Trauma and its consequences to the psychic health**

Trauma & traumatic experiences; Types of maltreatment and aggravating factors; Factors influencing resilience

**Lecture №11: Medical interview**

Main characteristics of the medical interview; Basic interviewing skills; Types of interviews according to structure, context and goals; 5-step patient-centered interview

**Lecture №12: Interview on painful topics that require special approach**

Introduction to Motivational interviewing in end-of-life care and loss; Effective skills & techniques in supporting patients in difficult situations; Mourning reaction. Social and cultural aspects of the Interview; Ethical principles.

**Lecture №13: Biopsychosocial model**

Introduction to the biopsychosocial model (George Engel); Main components of the biopsychosocial model of care.

## **Lecture №14: Needs assessment and individual care planning from the biopsychosocial paradigm.**

Needs Assessment: main components & information gathering; Process of individual care planning; Conclusion & best practice recommendations.

### **4.2.Seminars - 15 academic hours (7 seminars per 2 academic hours each)**

#### **Seminar №1: Doctor-Patient Relationship**

Introductory seminar, aimed at exploring the nature of positive Doctor-Patient Relationship (DPR) and its importance to the outcomes of care. Students participate in two exercises: 1) Identify and reflect on observations of clinical reality and personal experiences in order to outline the main aspects of healthy, nurturing doctor-patient interactions. 2) Watch and discuss a series of video interviews with patients outlining main components of the therapeutic bond. Both exercises are followed by group discussions.

#### **Seminar №2: Communication**

This seminar is aimed at enhancing students' skills in medical communication and increasing their understanding of the importance of addressing the patient's perspective. Communication skills are trained through a series of interactive exercises and role-play activities.

#### **Seminar №3: Psychological Development**

Students explore the milestones of psychological development through a series of exercises completed individually and in a large group. After resolving a test on Developmental milestones throughout the life-span, students explore different case studies (assisted by the lecturer) in order to differentiate normative from pathological development and to identify relevant influencing factors.

#### **Seminar №4 Personality and Perception of Illness**

This seminar is aimed to familiarize students with the core components of human personalities and its relevance to patient's behavior in health and illness. Concepts such as "personality trait" "temperament", "character" are explored and differentiated together with some principal foundations of the major personality theories.

#### **Seminar №5: Stress and Coping**

Students complete a series of exercises aimed at exploring the relationship between stress and illness in terms of emotional, behavioral and physiological pathways. After completing a true or false (myth or fact) exercises about stress students are engaged in a large-group discussion (with handouts provided) focusing on more specific topics such as: the impact of psychological factors (mood, beliefs, emotional expression) on individual stress response; coping mechanisms and the role of personality and social factors on the stress-illness link. Seminar is concluded with case studies of violence and maltreatment that should be discussed in small groups and ranked by severity.

#### **Seminar №6 Medical Interview**

This is a cornerstone seminar with direct implications to medical practice. After being introduced with the basic structure of the medical interview, students reenact a series of predetermined role-play scenarios in order to practice interviewing skills and techniques.

#### **Seminar №7: Components of the bio-psycho-social model**

Another practical seminar aimed at enhancing students' skills on needs assessment, case management and development of an individual care plan. Case studies are presented for group practice.

## **5. Supplementary teaching materials:**

Multimedia with video capability; flip chart or board; markers/chalk; video interviews; thematic handouts.

## **6. Assessment of acquired knowledge**

Oral exam.

### **6.1. Ongoing assessment – forms, frequency**

Ongoing assessment of knowledge during the seminars - activity and participation of students.

### **6.2 Semester exam - structure and exam characteristics, methods of forming the grade**

Students withdraw 2 syllabus questions and have the opportunity to develop paper-based answers, followed by an oral examination.

## **7. Syllabus for theoretical semester exam:**

1. Characteristics of the doctor - patient relationship. Models of doctor-patient relationship – paternalism, consumerism, partnership.
2. Elements of the positive doctor-patient relationship. Strengthening therapeutic alliance and adherence to treatment.
3. Communication: definition, theories and types of communication.
4. Communication: Perception, attribution, attitude. Levels of communication. Communication in different cultures.
5. Theories of Psychological Development - Psychoanalysis, Behaviorism, Cognitive Psychology.
6. Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development: life cycle, age-related crisis and development goals (positive and negative outcomes): from 1<sup>st</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> stage.
7. Personality and behavior in health and illness.
8. Theories of personality and psychological reactions to illness.
9. Theory of stress - phases in stress, signs and symptoms of stress. Coping with stress. Adaptive and maladaptive reactions to stress. Stress and illness.
10. Trauma and consequences to the psychic health. Types of maltreatment and aggravating factors. Resilience.
11. Interview. Types of interview. Interviewing skills. Adaptation of the interview to specific situations.
12. Interview on painful topics that require special approach. Mourning reaction. Social and cultural aspects of the Interview. Ethical principles.
13. Biopsychosocial model - principles, practice, and scientific inquiry.
14. Needs assessment and individual care planning from the biopsychosocial paradigm.

## **8. Academic literature:**

Ayers, S., Baum, A., McManus, C., Newman, S., Wallston, K., Weinman, J., West, R. (2007). *Cambridge Handbook of Psychology, Health and Medicine*. UK:Cambridge University Press

Ayers, C., De Visser, R. (2011) *Psychology for Medicine & Healthcare*. SAGE Publications

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Borrell-Carrió, F., Suchman, A., Epstein, R. (2004). The biopsychosocial model 25 years later: principles, practice, and scientific inquiry. *Annals of family medicine*, 2(6), 576–582. doi:10.1370/afm.245

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- Boyle, G., Matthews, G., Saklofske, D. (Eds.). (2008). The SAGE handbook of personality theory and assessment, Vol. 1. Personality theories and models. Sage Publications, Inc.
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- Evan M Forman. *Cultural Factors in Traumatic Stress*. Research Gate 2009. DOI: 10.1002/9781444305807.ch11,
- Lancaster, C., Gartner, A., Hatch, J., Peterson, A. (2014). *Handbook of Clinical Psychology in Medical Settings*.
- Francesc Borrell-Carrió, Anthony L. Suchman Ronald M. Epstein. *The Biopsychosocial Model 25 Years Later: Principles, Practice, and Scientific Inquiry*. *Ann Fam Med* 2004;2:576-582. DOI: 10.1370/afm.245.
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- Kendall-Tackett, K. (2009). Psychological trauma and physical health: A psychoneuroimmunology approach to etiology of negative health effects and possible interventions. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 1(1), 35–48. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0015128>
- Kusnanto, H., Agustian, D., Hilmanto, D. (2018). Biopsychosocial model of illnesses in primary care: A hermeneutic literature review. *Journal of family medicine and primary care*, 7(3), 497–500. doi:10.4103/jfmpc.jfmpc\_145\_17
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