**Health Psychology**

Job Summary

As a Health Psychologist you would focus on how biological, social and psychological factors influence health and wellbeing. The focus is on promoting healthy behaviour and avoiding illness. You would work with individuals and families either on a one-to-one basis or in groups in a variety of different settings including within the home, hospitals, clinics or doctor’s surgeries. In addition, you would work with healthy community members and healthcare professionals. Some of the key roles are:

* Designing strategies to improve health care
* Helping people deal more effectively with chronic illnesses such as heart disease or cancer
* Underpinning the processes which can explain, predict and change health behaviours
* Improving communications between health care practitioners and patients
* Providing expert advice or consultancy
* Clinical work (assessments, interviews, tests and psychological intervention)
* Looking at the psychological effects of having an illness and helping patients, carers and families to cope
* Research and teaching

Qualifications – How do I become a Health Psychologist?

1. You will need a 3-year degree in Psychology that meets the standards of accreditation by the British Psychological Society. Qualification with a 2i or more provides eligibility to apply for **GBC** (**G**raduate **B**asis for **C**hartered Membership of BPS).
2. You will need relevant work experience
3. You will need to have a Masters (MSc) in Health Psychology (1-year full time) OR a Stage 1BPS Qualification in Health Psychology. The latter covers the same material as an MSc but is effectively a self-study programme
* One-year full-time Masters in Health Psychology at the University of Southampton - http://www.soton.ac.uk/psychology/postgraduate/taught\_courses/msc\_health\_psychology.page. Scholarships and funding may be provided: http://www.soton.ac.uk/psychology/postgraduate/fees\_and\_funding.page
1. You will need to complete Stage 2 of the BPS Qualification in Health Psychology OR an MPhil (Master of Philosophy)/PhD (Doctor of Philosophy) to gain eligibility to apply for registration with the **HPC** (**H**ealth **P**rofessions **C**ouncil) and to become a Chartered Health Psychologist.
* MPhil/PhD in Health Psychology Research and Professional Practice at the University of Southampton: http://www.southampton.ac.uk/psychology/postgraduate/research\_degrees/courses/mphil\_phd\_health\_psychology\_research\_and\_professional\_practice\_pgr.page?
* Funding for UK/EU Students at University of Southampton: http://www.soton.ac.uk/postgraduate/feesandfunding/pgukeufunding.html
1. Some Universities offer a Doctorate programme which will make you eligible as a Chartered Psychologist.

What relevant work experience would I need?

Health Psychology is a relatively new area of applied psychology. Although there is an increasing demand, there is still a reasonably high level of competition, with the average number of applicants per place on a Masters course at Southampton being six.

Work experience into the health field is often a requirement for acceptance onto a postgraduate course. This can be voluntary or paid - either is just as valuable.

Sometimes it is difficult to find work experience in a health care setting. If this is the case, shadowing someone to find out more about their job would be useful or even arranging a meeting with them to discuss what their career entails, this will help you to familiarise yourself with the types of roles carried out by a Health Psychologist. The BPS allows you to search for psychologists in your area - http://www.bps.org.uk/psychology-public/find-psychologist/find-psychologist

The following points include examples of relevant work experience; some include jobs in the local area.

* The University of Southampton runs a programme for a Voluntary Research Assistant (VRA). This is unpaid and usually runs over the summer. It is a great opportunity to increase your chances of achieving a place on a postgraduate course. In addition, the researchers could write a letter of reference for you.
* Working within the NHS
<http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/explore_teachers_students.shtml>
* Information & Support volunteer for Macmillan – help people affected by cancer http://www.susu.org/community-volunteering/opportunities-detail.html?opportunity=Macmillan+Centre+-+Information+%26+Support+Volunteer
* Voluntary work for UK charities for people with brain injuries at Headway Southampton - <http://www.headway-soton.co.uk/volunteering/>. There are currently two opportunities available: one is supporting the individuals with activities and the other is working as a volunteer mentor.
* Volunteering at local hospitals, eg: Southampton Royal South Hants Hospital
* Care Assistant role

Jobs are advertised in the [Psychologist Appointments](http://www.psychapp.co.uk/), which is part of [The Psychologist](http://www.bps.org.uk/publications/thepsychologist/the-psychologist_home.cfm) (the BPS monthly magazine), in newspapers (e.g. The Times, The Guardian, The Independent) and in specialist publications from the Health Service Journal and the Department of Health website.

**If you are working with children or sensitive information you will need a CRB check.**

To find out more about life as a Health Psychologist, take a look at the BPS video: http://www.youtube.com/user/bpsmediacentre#p/u/9/7TyzUTq2L5A