

New directions for the Journal of Health Psychology

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Rachel A Annunziato¹ , Abigail Locke² 
and Gareth J Treharne³ 

Abstract

This editorial reflects on the current and future directions of the Journal of Health Psychology. As the Co-Editors in Chief, we briefly outline our positionality and the importance of our Editorial Board and other peer reviewers in ensuring the rigour of accepted articles. We comment on the middle-ground that has to be struck when considering the scope of open science given that data sharing has to be tempered by ethical and methodological considerations. We re-visit the aims and scope of the journal and reflect on some of the key aspects of diversity that set the journal apart from others. We showcase a selection of Editors' picks that are published in this issue and available as a special collection. The Journal of Health Psychology has a bright future because of the contributions we receive from around the world as well as the outstanding support of peer reviewers.

Keywords

health psychology, open science, peer review, qualitative research, quantitative research

As the three of us have been serving in the role of Co-Editors in Chief of the Journal of Health Psychology for almost a complete 3-year term, we offer these reflections and our thoughts on a path forward for the journal as a leading international voice in the field of health psychology for several decades now. We outline our goals as Co-Editors in Chief, the article types we publish, and we note some of the highlights from this issue of the journal. The three of us come together as a team of Co-Editors in Chief from across three continents, with Rachel in Northern America, Abigail in Europe and Gareth in the Pacific. We also are diverse in our genders and sexualities, with two women and one gay man leading the journal. However, we are mindful that we all come from Western countries and we are all White, cisgender, and

in the privileged position of permanent academic roles. Fortunately, we are supported by a

¹Fordham University, USA

²Keele University, UK

³Ōtākou Whakaihū Waka – the University of Otago, Aotearoa/New Zealand

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Corresponding author:

Gareth J Treharne, Department of Psychology, Ōtākou Whakaihū Waka – the University of Otago, PO Box 56, Ōtepoti/Dunedin, Otago 9054, Aotearoa/New Zealand.
Email: hpq@sagepub.com

diverse global Editorial Board and numerous ad hoc peer reviewers whose input is critical to ensuring the ongoing diversity and outstanding nature of the content we publish.

Over the past 3 years, we have expanded the roles available to Editorial Board members and now feature both Associate Editors and Corresponding Editors, in the hopes of engaging with scholars of different career stages and availability. We welcome expressions interest in serving with us from active academics who are available to regularly act as a peer reviewer. Our initial work has also included a thorough review of composition of the Editorial Board, particularly in regards to regional inclusivity, and reconsidering the ways in which the journal approach open science. The latter of these initiatives was the motivation behind the Special Section on Data Sharing (published in June 2024). One of our main aims as Co-Editors in Chief is to continue to stay abreast of the current and contemporary issues in the field of health psychology and it is evident that the move to open science is here to stay as we transition into a new era of publishing and rapid and fuller availability of the information underpinning research. Therefore, it is imperative that the Journal of Health Psychology remains invested in a process that contributes to trustworthy research but does not put undue pressure or barriers on any particular types of methodology. This approach fits with the adage referring to open data as ‘as open as possible, as closed as necessary’ (Landi et al., 2020: 1). We therefore encourage linkage to relevant aspects of data where ethically acceptable for the type of study in question. In some cases, privacy supersedes the sharing of data, for example in qualitative research or lifecourse research where ongoing participation or reidentification is highly likely or of high concern to participants (Gore-Gorszewska, 2024; Lamb et al., 2024; Prosser et al., 2024; Reeves et al., 2023). We also encourage researchers to continue considering how your research might be designed to allow aspects of data to be shared

beyond the summary level data provided within articles. For example, databases and code for statistical analyses or expanded set of quotes from qualitative studies can be highly informative for readers and those conducting meta-analyses or meta-syntheses making additional use of the findings from primary studies.

It is also fitting that in our first editorial since becoming Co-Editors in Chief we consider the aims and scope of the journal and the types of articles that we feature. In the wake of the global COVID-19 pandemic, our aims seem as relevant as ever: ‘*Journal of Health Psychology is an international peer-reviewed journal that to support and help shape research in health psychology from around the world. It provides a platform for traditional empirical analyses as well as more qualitative and/or critically oriented approaches. It also addresses the social contexts in which psychological and health processes are embedded*’. In addition, the Journal of Health Psychology embraces publishing a range of methodologies, including qualitative and quantitative studies, research from a variety of perspectives including critical, community and clinical approaches to health psychology, and articles that present primary data or reviews.

With regards to the article types the Journal of Health Psychology publishes, we have made some adjustments to better align with the needs of our potential authors. The abstract word limit is now increased to 150 words to allow a more comprehensive overview whilst maintain the journal’s emphasis on conciseness. The word limit for each submission type includes the reference list and any tables or figures but does not include any supplementary materials. It is important to note that supplementary materials should not include any essential material as they are not integrated into the main text and are published as submitted. We are sometimes asked for exemptions to the word limit but we ask authors to stick to the below word limits for new submissions in order to ensure articles are appropriately concise for readers to digest and feasible for peer reviewers to comprehensively review.

The types of manuscript considered for publication in the Journal of Health Psychology now consist of:

- (a) Full-length Reports on empirical studies of up to 8000 words. Sections of an overall study can be submitted as a full-length report if they are coherent and distinct from other publications on the same study, but we discourage the idea of 'salami slicing' studies to present extensive details about just one part of an overall study if hearing the fuller story is possible. It is usually possible to be more concise to meet the word limit, but where that is not possible we encourage authors to consider our sibling journal, Health Psychology Open, which accepts submissions of any length but still considers conciseness during peer review.
- (b) Rapid Reports on empirical studies of up to 4000 words. Rapid reports are a new format for the Journal of Health Psychology with the aim of facilitating rapid communication about new developments and prompt publication of findings from cutting-edge studies. These submissions may, for example, not include an introductory literature review of the depth required for a full-length report. We encourage brief but informative methodological details, findings and consideration of what a particular rapid report contribute to the existing literature.
- (c) Review Articles including systematic reviews, narrative reviews and theoretical contributions of up to 8000 words. In the case of review articles we strongly encourage use of supplementary materials to include additional tables that provide a level of detail about the studies or other material reviewed that cannot be included in the main text. We welcome all academic approaches to reviewing literature and examining theoretical perspectives so as to advance the field of health psychology. We consider systematic reviews but only where the review results in a substantive contribution beyond what is already known. We encourage authors to follow protocols for scoping of systematic review to ensure a suitable volume of research is included.
- (d) Mini-reviews of up to 4000 words. Mini-reviews are another new format for the Journal of Health Psychology with the aim of encouraging prompt coverage of topical issues in health psychology. Mini-reviews must focus on an emerging concern and must cover a new body of existing research rather than a single study. Mini-reviews can apply a systematic review approach that results in a small body of literature being included. Any other approach to literature reviewing is also welcome within mini-reviews. Review articles over 4000 words must be submitted in the full-length category of review article.
- (e) Commissioned Editorials of up to 3000 words. Editorials have to be approved in advance by the Co-Editors in Chief and are typically reserved for introducing special collections of new or existing articles published in the Journal of Health Psychology.

The current issue of the Journal of Health Psychology conveys our vision and highlights work that illustrates the excellence of research we are accepting. As we hope is conveyed in many ways, we are deeply committed to and so proud of our international scope. The Journal of Health Psychology receives important work from around the world that captures psychological aspects of leading global health problems. We aspire to disseminate research with implications that pertain to our readership in all corners of the globe via the location or scope. In this vein, we highlight papers that exemplify this. Cardiovascular disease (CVD) continues to be the leading cause of mortality globally and for

decades our field has established the impact of mental health on both mortality and morbidity (Lopes and Kamau-Mitchell, 2024). The intersection of CVD and the COVID-19 pandemic is of great significance and we are pleased to share findings in this regard. Lopes and Kamau-Mitchell (2024) conducted structural equation modelling using a large sample to investigate how sex, age, occupational factors, anxiety, depression and maladaptive coping behaviours are associated with cardiovascular health, uncovering differential risk patterns by age and occupation during a period of remote work. Relatedly, as we face an expansive global mental health crisis, its impact on the burden of disease broadly is increasing. Studies that offer implications across regions are paramount. For example, Schleef et al. (2024) utilised the Social Longitudinal Study of Chile to better understand how the physical symptoms of depression impact health and life satisfaction, highlighting the importance of assessing and considering both mood and somatic manifestations as we seek to improve well-being. As the global population ages, we also wish to call attention to research that aims to make a difference for the wellbeing of our elders. Akinrolie et al. (2024) examined the acceptability of Virtual Motivational Interviewing (VIMINT) in a trial of virtual MI for physical activity in older adults. Overall, both patients and counsellors found this approach to be convenient and the authors gleaned benefits and limitations to be addressed as future directions.

Innovative application of a diverse methodologies remains a priority for *Journal of Health Psychology* and we continue to feature outstanding applications of qualitative and quantitative studies. For example, Parsons et al. (2024) applied Q-methodology to understand flourishing among young British people with chronic pain. Their Q set consisted of around 50 statements about chronic pain and flourishing and when ranked by their P set of over 50 participants with chronic pain led to three distinct viewpoints. These viewpoints tell us about

the experiences and perspectives of young people with chronic pain and can be used to inform practice and interventions. In another stand-out example, Lee (2024) applied item response theory to develop an enhanced way of measuring quality of life among older adults. Analysing data on the Satisfaction With Life Scale from over 3500 older adults who had responded to the 2021 Korean Happiness Survey they determined which items function appropriately and consistently across age. Their findings help inform ways of measuring quality of life reliably when working with individuals or nationwide data. Health psychology research often stops short of directly informing service provision. de Visser et al. (2024) applied interview methods to understand experiences of remote consultations, which became even more relevant during the Covid pandemic. From their interviews with 17 individuals, including 5 who spoke a first language other than English, revealed a range of themes about what can make remote consultations appropriate and user-friendly, and the gaps in empathy and continuity of care that can arise.

The breadth of focus of the *Journal of Health Psychology* remains a key priority to ensure that the discipline of health psychology is promoted and represented in its entirety. We see this breadth represented in the current issue, which includes the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis study by Kilmartin and Day (2024) that considers women's lived experiences of narcolepsy. The analysis demonstrated the impact of a having a condition that has a lack of awareness amongst others. This lack of awareness leads to delays in diagnosis and a lack of support post-diagnosis. From here, we move to Lawrie et al.'s (2024) study that explores considers the experiences of undergoing a caesarean delivery among wāhine Māori (Māori women) in Aotearoa New Zealand with the aim of identifying how healthcare systems can meet the needs of these women. As the authors note, wāhine Māori tend to be overrepresented in negative post-natal outcomes. Their study

applied kaupapa Māori principles to thematic analyses of interviews and explored a range of issues related to women's overall experiences, including the need for bodily autonomy and choice. The findings highlight the importance of Māori health models in understanding and providing culturally-affirming healthcare. Another stand-out example by Hidalgo-Muñoz et al. (2024) applied a network analysis to explore emotional wellbeing in patients with CVD, in particular, to explore the differences between genders and therefore to consider the implementation of personalised therapies. By analysing network data from 593 CVD patients, looking at measures including anxiety, depression, affect, social support, self-efficacy and others, the authors found differences in gender, arguing that these differences should be considered to implement tailored and integrative therapies for each CVD patient.

The contemporary nature of the *Journal of Health Psychology* is also reflected in our recent special collection about Abortion and Reproductive Rights as a reaction to the overturning of Roe versus Wade in 2023, as well as our Special Issue on War, Terrorism, Genocide and Politicide, which is due to be published in November and December 2024 and features over 25 contributions to truly encompass the profound health implications of global conflict. Our overarching aim as Co-Editors in Chief is to continue to keep abreast of the increasingly broad scope of health psychology and reflect on its usefulness in significant issues unfolding around the world. We welcome submissions covering the global diversity of research in health psychology, and we encourage researchers around the world to sign up as peer reviewers through the online submission system.

Author contributions

RAA, AL and GJT conceptualised this article, reviewed the referenced studies, drafted and edited the article, and authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ORCID iDs

Rachel A Annunziato  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2665-6097>

Abigail Locke  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2759-0579>

Gareth J Treharne  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0065-2995>

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