

'Strength of feeling' for the NHS

The government's controversial Health and Social Care Bill has finally been enacted after more than a year of tense political wrangling. The new Act will lead to wide-ranging changes in the NHS in England, many of which will have a professional impact on applied psychologists.

The Act is intended to help the NHS respond to challenges such as an ageing population and the rising costs of treatments. According to the Department of Health, the main changes the Act will introduce include: clinically led commissioning; more patient choice, with charities and independent sector providers able to offer NHS services; the introduction of Healthwatch patient organisations; the creation of a new public health body Public Health England; and the removal of unnecessary tiers of management.

The Bill was opposed by many professional bodies, including the British Medical Association, the

Royal College of Psychiatrists, and the British Psychological Society. The Society wrote to Health Secretary Andrew Lansley expressing its concern that the Bill would not improve patient care, and about loss of expertise in commissioning. The Society argued that all relevant professions, including psychologists, should be represented on

the new commissioning bodies.

The Society's Division of Clinical Psychology (DCP) was also opposed to the Bill, believing that the NHS should favour collaboration over competition. John Hanna, the DCP's director of policy said 'competition should serve to improve efficiency, not to generate profit for private-sector providers or redirect NHS clinicians toward private work and away from what should be their sole objective – high-quality health provision for those who need it.' The DCP also added its voice to calls for psychologists to be represented on commissioning bodies.

In light of the Bill passing into law, Society President Dr Carole Allan said: 'We recognise it is important to build on the strength of feeling for the NHS that is more clearly evident than ever before. The next stage is to engage and work with government and key stakeholders to ensure that we provide the best possible quality of services.' CJ



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Dementia challenge

Prime Minister David Cameron announced in March that dementia would henceforth be a top priority for his government. The funding for research into dementia and other neurodegenerative diseases will be doubled to over £66 million per year by 2014/15. Planned research initiatives include encouraging

memory clinics to invite patients to participate in quality research, and channelling funding through the Economic and Social Research Council and the National Institute for Health Research toward finding out how the quality of life of people with dementia can be improved.

In association with the Alzheimer's Society, there will also be new initiatives to raise the awareness of dementia, including partnerships with supermarkets and other companies, and a high-profile Department of Health campaign to run this autumn. There are also plans to improve the diagnosis and care of people with dementia, including financial rewards for hospitals in England that offer risk assessments to over 90 per cent of over-75-year-olds admitted as emergencies.

The government announcements were timed to coincide with publication by the Alzheimer's Society of the

first in a new series of annual reports on how well people are living with dementia in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. For *Dementia 2012: A National Challenge*, 306 people with dementia but living independently, or carers on their behalf, were surveyed, as were 2070 members of the public. Sixty-one per cent of those with dementia reported feeling lonely, 77 per cent felt anxious or depressed and nearly half had lost friends.

'Doubling funding for research, tackling diagnosis and calling for a radical shift in the way we talk, think and act on dementia will help to transform lives,' said Jeremy Hughes, Chief Executive of the Alzheimer's Society. 'There are currently 800,000 people with dementia, yet too many are not able to live well with the condition. The Prime Minister is leading the way but from Plymouth to Preston, from the boardroom to bus drivers, we all have a role to play.' CJ

| Dementia 2012 is available for download at tinyurl.com/c52vfav

The Prime Minister's challenge on dementia is available at tinyurl.com/cy8xzu5



APA report on willpower

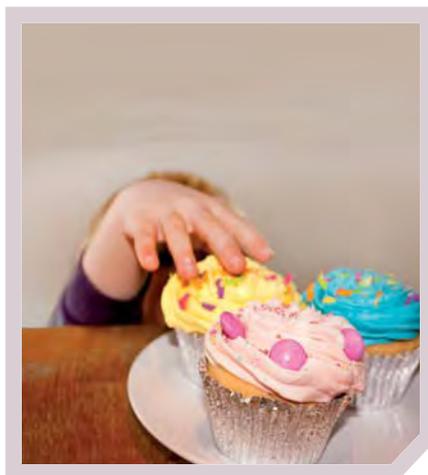
The American Psychological Association has published a new, free report into the science of willpower: 'What you need to know about willpower: The psychological science of self-control' (see tinyurl.com/8x49wky).

The report follows the results of an online survey of 566 adults, commissioned by the APA, which found that 93 per cent had set themselves behavioural change goals for 2012, despite the fact that fewer than half had succeeded in maintaining goals they'd set themselves in the preceding year (see tinyurl.com/73pgyxm). Most goals were related to health (e.g. losing weight) or finance (e.g. saving more money). Asked to state the obstacles to achieving their objectives, just over a quarter of the sample cited lack of willpower. But they were optimistic about this – more than 70 per cent believed willpower was something you can improve.

The report draws on studies by Roy Baumeister, Walter Mischel and others to make the case that willpower is like a muscle – short-term demands leave it weakened, but more use of willpower over time ultimately leads to greater self-control. Baumeister is quoted as saying that behavioural change requires three components – the motivation to change, monitoring change and the willpower to see that change through. Mischel's classic marshmallow research (in which kids had to resist a marshmallow and other treats placed before them) is invoked to make the case that successful behavioural change is often about planning ahead and avoiding temptation. Long-term evidence from the children tested by Mischel also shows how greater self-control is associated with better outcomes in life.

As well as avoiding temptation, the report recommends several other strategies for improving willpower, including sustaining your blood sugar levels through consumption of healthy snacks and meals that don't contain refined sugar (research is cited suggesting low glucose levels weaken self-control). It's also recommended to focus on one goal at a time – trying to deal with multiple goals will leave willpower too depleted to make any progress. And it says implementation intentions can help bolster self-control for when temptation can't be avoided – these come in the form of 'if-then' statements, as in 'if I'm offered a drink, then I'll ask for club soda with lime'.

It's worth noting that not all experts agree with these claims about the above-mentioned links between nutritional energy levels and self-control. In a study that's in press at *Psychological Science*, a team led by Daniel Molden at Northwestern University report that merely rinsing the mouth with an energy drink is enough to bolster self-control. This is consistent with the idea that carbohydrates boost willpower via their effects on motivation, not via their effects on energy levels. Molden told us he was pleased to see the APA report gave lots of attention to perceptual and motivational explanations of dietary effects on willpower, but he added: '...it certainly pains me a bit that APA gave a highly



public endorsement to what I think is a flawed account [the energy model] of limited self-regulatory resources.'

Reflecting on the APA-commissioned survey, Norman Anderson, the organisation's Chief Executive Officer and Executive Vice President, said: 'It is reassuring to know that even though people view a lack of willpower as a hurdle in their quest to live healthier lives, they believe they can learn the skills they need to change their lifestyles. Research shows that setting goals, as well as tracking progress and seeking out a community of support, can be tremendously effective in helping people increase their self-control and lead healthier lives.' CJ

See Roy Baumeister's article in the February issue of *The Psychologist*: 'Self-control – the moral muscle' (tinyurl.com/7rvy6zg)

ETHICAL BLOGGING

The blogging platform Tumblr has updated its usage policy to ban blogs that promote self-harm, eating disorders and suicide. 'Don't post content that actively promotes or glorifies self-harm,' the site's new wording states. Blogs that feature discussion and raise awareness will be permitted, 'only blogs that cross the line into active promotion or glorification' will be removed. A spokesperson for Beat, the eating disorder charity, welcomed the news and urged other sites to follow suit.

FRAUD INVESTIGATION

The Levelt committee at Tilburg University, established to investigate the fraudulent research activities of social psychologist Diederik Stapel, has published its first definite results (see December News, 2011 for background information). From 20 papers examined to date, 12 journal articles are identified as having been compromised, as well as the dissertations of three research students.

See tinyurl.com/d2nvzjw for further details

CLEFT LIP RESEARCH

Psychologists at the Centre for Appearance Research at UWE Bristol have launched a large-scale project to investigate the experiences of parents whose children have a cleft lip and/or palate. 'By following families as the child develops, we will gain a much better understanding of the psychological effects of cleft,' said Chartered Health Psychologist, Professor Nichola Rumsey. The UWE Bristol study is part of a larger £11 million research programme called The Cleft Collective, which will also involve genetic studies by researchers at the University of Bristol into the causes of cleft, and clinical trials by the University of Manchester.

More information at www.cleftcollective.org.uk

HAPPINESS WEEKEND

The country's first 'happiness weekend' took place in March at Wellington College, the Berkshire public school that has led the way in introducing psychologically informed well-being lessons for pupils. The happiness weekend was led by Chartered Clinical Psychologist and BPS Fellow Professor Neil Frude of The Happiness Consultancy. According to the group's website, 'the course will stress the key importance of relationships for happiness and will show how our personal happiness can radiate to other people'. CJ

FUNDING NEWS

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) in the USA have the following calls open:

mHealth Tools to Promote Effective Patient-Provider Communication, Adherence to Treatment and Self Management of Chronic Diseases in Underserved Populations (R21). The call focuses on the use of smartphone technologies to facilitate patient-provider communication around goal setting, treatment reminders and feedback on patient progress to improve health outcomes. Standard application dates apply, 16 June, 16 October and 16 February.

tinyurl.com/83f26xa

Social Neuroscience and Neuroeconomics of Aging (R21). The emphasis of this call is on economic, social or emotional processes and how they associate with genetic or neurobiological processes. This should be of relevance to ageing, age differences or age-related change. Closing dates on 7 May 2012 and 16 February 2013.

tinyurl.com/7hg9atk

The ESRC **Knowledge Exchange Opportunities** scheme provides an opportunity to apply for funding for knowledge exchange activities between social scientists and research users. The scheme allows applicants to think creatively about how to undertake knowledge exchange, for example by developing podcasts and videos or arranging academic placements with voluntary or business organisations. Activities at all stages of the research process will be considered. The scheme is open to social scientists, including PhD students. Closing date for nominations is 7 June 2012.

tinyurl.com/3hnj5fy

The NIHR Knowledge Mobilisation Fellowship Scheme provides funding to allow individuals with significant **NHS and/or academic experience to mobilise research derived knowledge within healthcare settings.** As the scheme is designed to encourage partnership working between the NHS and higher education institutions, applications must be supported by at least two organisations from these different sectors. The closing date for applications is 4 July 2012

tinyurl.com/cff57kw

The BUPA Foundation again has funding available via their Seed Corn Fund. The scheme aims to fund research-based solutions into actions to **prevent or alleviate chronic disease or the adverse elements of ageing and to promote well-being; lead to the sustained uptake of healthy lifestyles; and improve public health to a significant degree.**

The Foundation also has objectives to achieve behaviour change relating to smoking, diet, physical activity and alcohol consumption; facilitating well-being and preventing mental ill health; improving patient decision making; and using new technologies to organise and interpret health outcome data. Research projects should combine elements of the aims and objectives of the Foundation. The closing date for applications is 6 July 2012.

tinyurl.com/cxwxovv

info

For more, see www.bps.org.uk/funds
Funding bodies should e-mail news to Elizabeth Beech on elibeech@bps.org.uk for possible inclusion



Society member to head world suicide body

University of Stirling Professor of Psychology Rory O'Connor has been elected to the position of President-Elect of the International Academy for Suicide Research, which is the leading international organisation to promote high-quality research in the field of suicidal behaviour throughout the world.

Professor O'Connor, a Chartered Psychologist, is the first UK-based holder of this prestigious position and will serve on the Board of Directors for four years, with two years as President-Elect and two as President.

Professor O'Connor, who has been conducting research into suicidal behaviour since 1994 said: 'I am delighted to be elected President-Elect of the academy. Scotland is recognised throughout the world for its pioneering suicide research and prevention activities, so it really is a tremendous honour for me to be elected by my international colleagues to this office.'

'Although there have been many important advances in recent years, our understanding of why people die by suicide and how best to intervene to prevent such tragedies is still fragmented. Given the scale of the problem – one million people end their own lives each year across the globe – governments, research councils and other funding bodies need to prioritise research into suicide and its prevention. We also need to enthuse and train the next generation of researchers and clinicians who will lead the fight against suicide in the decades to come.'

'Suicide prevention is everyone's business, so I am keen to engage with researchers, clinicians, policy makers and anyone affected by suicide to tackle this terrible global problem. Only through working together will we achieve our mutual goal of reducing suicide throughout the world.'