

BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL ASPECTS OF HEALTH AND DISEASE

VOLUME 1

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INTRODUCTION

The book *Biopsychosocial Aspects of Health and Disease* is a continuation of a series aimed at exploring complex aspects of health and its disruptions, from the perspectives of different sciences. The previous volumes of the series were published in Polish. This book, prepared in English, comprises six sections divided into two volumes. Volume 1 concentrates on such issues as the mind and body relationships, psychological factors in the course of somatic diseases and mental disorders. Volume 2 focuses on psychological aspects of health in children and adolescents, existential and religious aspects of diseases, as well as health promotion and psychoeducation. The contents of each section reflect new theoretical developments and recent empirical research undertaken within the frameworks of various scientific disciplines which are all related through their common subject matter – the man and his health. This allows a comprehensive analysis of the issue of health and disease.

The papers with a strong medical and biological background pertain mainly to explanations of biological bases of functioning, including molecular, endocrine and immunological aspects of health and disease. The psychological perspective is also represented by the papers which elaborate on psychological mechanisms underlying health and disease. The particular emphasis is put on the existential and religious problems with regard to the possibilities of re-evaluation of difficult situations, including changed life circumstances due to a chronic disease. Much attention was also devoted to the meaning of hope with regard to cancer patients, experiences of people institutionalized in nursing homes, the role of hierarchy of values in disease-related experiences, coping mechanisms in the situation of the disease, and social support.

The social perspective is reflected in the articles which undertake the issues of contemporary social threats to health and well-being posed by addictions to the Internet, computer games, mobile phones, drugs of abuse and alcohol, as well as pathologically shaped eating-related attitudes and behaviors. The range of social factors covers the significance of social support and interpersonal relationships in health maintenance. In the situation of the disease, positive relationships are emphasized between the patients and caregivers or professionals providing medical and psychological care. Significant areas for health are also explored in interdisciplinary research, such as socioeconomic factors, social support and also psychological variables including emotional, characterological maturity, skills of coping with problems – they all affect quality of life both in health and disease.

In this book, the authors do not only emphasize negative, difficult aspects of diseases and disorders but also indicate positive aspects, the strengths and coping potential of those who are afflicted by various health problems. An advantage of this work lies also in the fact that the articles comprised in this book represent research carried out in multiple academic centers from all around Poland. Many of them reflect extensive clinical and therapeutic experience of their authors in the fields of both mental and somatic disorders. One of the important aims of this work was to show a wide range of scientific research and interests undertaken by representatives of various disciplines: medical doctors, pharmacists, biologists, psychologists, nurses, and social workers. At the same time, an equally important goal was an effort of integrating these different perspectives and achievements with the hope for better understanding, care and support for the person who is ill, disabled or requiring support or prevention measures.

The Editors hope that, while reading this book, the reader will be able to discover detailed findings from recent research on many specific topics but also discern more universal deep relationships between the man's *psyche*, *soma* and *socium*.

Publication of this book would not be possible without efforts of many dedicated people. Therefore, we would like to acknowledge, first of all, the Reviewers – prof. Maria Koziół-Montewka, MD, PhD, from the Medical University in Lublin, and prof. Anna Zalewska-Janowska, MD, PhD, from the Medical University in Łódź – for their time spent on reading and reviewing the manuscript of this book. We would also like to thank Mr. Ernest Mosquera, BS, and Dr. Jan Kobyłecki, ThD, for their invaluable, patient assistance in the linguistic revision and proofreading of the manuscript. Our gratitude is also to Mr. Jacek Gierus, MA, and Ms. Katarzyna Grzesiuk, MA, for their help in collecting the articles and keeping up the correspondence with the Authors. We would also like to acknowledge the work of Mr. Łukasz Basaj and Mr. Michał Kozaczuk who assisted in formatting many articles of this manuscript.

Stanisława Steuden, Konrad Janowski