

Patient information

Gastroenterology Clinical Psychology Service

Gastroenterology and Psychology Departments

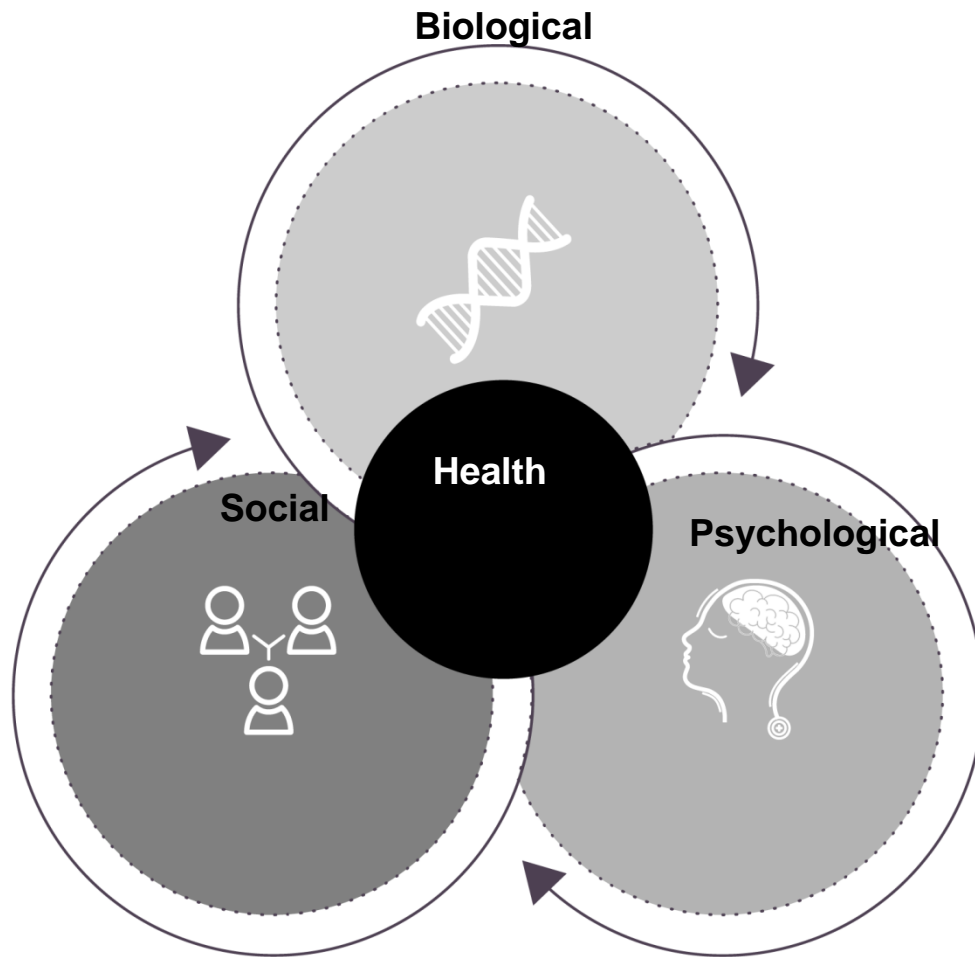
The links between psychological and physical wellbeing (mind and body) has been well recognised. Having gastrointestinal (GI) difficulties can lead to disruption in many different parts of life, including work, education, hobbies, relationships, and it is not uncommon to experience emotional fallout from this.

There is a growing evidence base of:

- the unmet psychological needs of people with a GI condition
- the links between the mind and the gut (brain – gut links)
- the effectiveness of psychological therapies for;
 - Improving treatment adherence and management.
 - Improving emotional wellbeing.
 - Improving confidence and sense of control.
 - Improving quality of life and self – identity.

The Gastroenterology team recognise and understand that having a gastrointestinal (GI) condition, and the GI health care journey, can be difficult and distressing. In clinical practice GI conditions are rarely independent of psychological symptoms and there appears to be an interaction between the GI tract and the brain. In considering whether you feel it would be helpful to see a clinical psychologist the team want to reassure you that this **does not** mean problems will be seen as “all in your head” or that it is a “psychological problem”.

We understand living with chronic gastroenterology conditions, and the physical symptoms these present, is very difficult and can affect you emotionally and socially and this is very normal.



Referral Processes:

You need to be referred by a member of the Liverpool University Hospitals Gastroenterology Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT). However, this referral should be made with your consent and agreement with the reasons for referral. Appointments are either virtual, over 'NHS Attend Anywhere' or face to face. Medical care will be continued throughout.

All appointments, and / or series of appointments are time limited and aimed at promoting self – management skills.

There are different options available depending on each person's particular difficulties and preferences.

These include:

- One off supportive session - if you have a particular problem or question (usually one hour duration).
- Signposting – referral or advice regarding other services that may better meet your needs.
- Therapy (generally four to six sessions with a maximum of eight sessions – first session lasts one hour, subsequent sessions usually last 50 minutes).
- Psychological assessment and consultation with your medical team for more indirect work and support.

What does a Clinical Psychologist in Gastroenterology do?

The Clinical Psychologist's role is to firstly talk with you about what you have been going through, what you are struggling with, and how you are feeling. They will then help you understand where psychological approaches might benefit you and what changes you could make to help cope with the challenges. The overall aim is to help you develop a 'toolbox' of coping strategies you can use long term to help you work towards your goals and improve self-esteem and confidence.

This service is for you if:

- You recognise your GI issues are having an impact on your psychological wellbeing (mood, perspective / thoughts) and are worried about this negatively affecting your life.
- You recognise your psychological wellbeing may be impacting how you experience or manage your GI issues.
- You would like to have a safe space to explore this.
- You would like to make some changes to improve your quality of life.

This is not for you if:

- You are currently seeing another therapist or mental health professional
- Your distress or concerns are more related to non – gastroenterology issues (in this case you might want to speak to your family doctor (GP) or another healthcare provider. There are many community services that offer psychological therapy for more general or non – GI related distress and difficulty – some resources have been listed at the end of this booklet.
- You are feeling suicidal or worried about harming yourself or someone else - If you are worried about your safety at the moment, or having thoughts about harming yourself or others, please seek urgent help from your GP about a crisis referral or visit the Emergency Department (A&E) of your local hospital.

Can I bring someone with me?

- It can be daunting to come to hospital to meet a new clinician so you may wish to bring someone with you. Usually, psychology appointments are carried out with just the patient in the room because having a family member there can affect what you may or may not choose to discuss. This could affect the psychologist's understanding of how you really feel. However, most psychologists are happy for you to bring a person you can trust for part of the first assessment appointment. For some people, family members can be an important person to have present for the assessment to help them remember some information.
- Once you have had your first appointment, it is standard practice for the psychologist to ask that you are seen alone for therapy sessions – and this also applies to sessions conducted virtually.

What if I cannot attend an appointment?

We appreciate that sometimes people need to cancel appointments. We can rearrange appointments when they are cancelled occasionally, however if cancellations are frequent, we may not be able to replace all cancelled appointments.

Research shows for therapy to be effective, regular attendance at appointments is necessary. Regularly missing or cancelling appointments can be a sign that it might not be the right time for attending therapy.

Where regular attendance is not possible, normally we will discharge you from the Gastroenterology Clinical Psychology Service. Should things change, and you find you are able to attend regularly in future, you can always contact the service directly and ask to be seen again.

Is what I tell the Clinical Psychologist confidential?

The Clinical Psychologist will make notes in a psychology file to keep track of how therapy develops. No other doctor or nurses in the hospital see these notes.

We have electronic hospital records for those involved in your care to share important information and provide updates on your care. The Clinical Psychologist will write a brief note on this system to say you attended and provide a brief plan. This information will be visible to other health care workers involved in your care.

The Clinical Psychologist will write clinic letters to the person who referred you and you will also receive a copy of these letters unless you request not to. Clinic letters would normally be copied to your family doctor (GP) and other members of the team at the hospital who are involved in your care. However, should there be some details you have discussed with the Clinical Psychologist but would prefer not to share with other health professionals, please do discuss this with your Clinical Psychologist.

There are two situations in which the Clinical Psychologist would have to break confidentiality,

1. If a court of law instructs them to.
2. If you tell the Clinical Psychologist something that makes them concerned you or someone else is at risk of serious harm.

These requests or concerns would usually be discussed with you and in the case of concerns regarding harm to self or others – sharing information would always be with the intention of getting you, or somebody else some help.

Do Psychological Treatments really work?

Psychological treatments work: A large number of randomised controlled trials show that short courses of certain psychological interventions can markedly improve the symptoms of several gastroenterological difficulties while simultaneously enhancing emotional well-being and quality of life and sometimes reducing healthcare needs as well.
(Palsson and Whitehead; 2013 - Clin Gastroenterol Hepatol)

Self – Evaluation and Service Evaluation:

During your time with the psychologist, you will work together to reflect on progress and whether you feel the work you are doing together is helpful. In addition you may be asked to complete questionnaires at the beginning and end of therapy as well as a service evaluation. We are keen to listen to feedback from patients in order to continue to develop and improve services.

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future. Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further information

Contact details:

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