Faculty of Medicine in Rijeka

Curriculum
2025/2026

For course

Psychological medicine II

Study program:	**Medical Studies in English (R)** University integrated undergraduate and graduate study
Department:	**Department of Psychiatry and Psychological Medicine**
Course coordinator:	**izv.prof.dr. sc. Kaštelan Ana, dr. med.**
Year of study:	**3**
ECTS:	**2**
Incentive ECTS:	**0 (0.00%)**
Foreign language:	**Possibility of teaching in a foreign language**

Course information:

Psychological medicine is a clinical discipline that helps doctors and patients improve the ways to deal with the disease and the treatment process. This is important in all medical disciplines because no clinical practice can ignore the psychological and emotional reactions of patients and doctors. Psychological medicine emphasizes the position of the patient as an integral human being, in a specific social environment, through different life phases and in all life circumstances.
The main goal of the course is to develop the sensitivity and understanding of the psychological aspects of physical illness and the ability to observe and recognize emotional interactions between patients and doctors.
Course objectives are:
- Understanding the relationship between patient – physician - disease
- Identifying the psychological components of the disease
- Explaining and defining transference and countertransference
- Assessment of the factors that shape attitudes towards the disease and the patient
- Explaining the significance of empathy
- Explaining the psychological reactions to the disease
- Explaining the psychological factors that contribute to the onset of the disease
- Explaining the psychological factors as the disease modulators

Upon completion of the course the student will:
- Adopt communication skills and conduct an interview with a patient
- Assess and describe the psychological condition, symptoms of anxiety, stress, crisis, and mourning reactions
- Identify transference and countertransference reactions
- Develop empathy for patients, family members of patients, colleagues, and other professional associates

Expected outcomes and competencies are:
- Communicating with patients and colleagues and conducting medical interviews
- Identifying difficulties in relation to patients
- Identifying transference and countertransference phenomena
- To recognize anxiety in a patient
- To recognize the type of patient psychological response to the disease
- To identify and describe the patient's cope mechanisms

List of assigned reading:

Sadock BJ, Sadock VA, Ruiz P.: Kaplan & Sadock's SYNOPSIS OF PSYCHIATRY, Eleventh Edition, Wolters Kluwer (selected chapters)
Teaching materials (text, PPT presentations, selected professional and/or scientific papers) attached on the Microsoft Teams (Files), marked as obligatory reading

List of optional reading:

Selected professional and/or scientific papers recommended by tutors

Curriculum:

Lectures list (with titles and explanation):

L1. Physical and psychological factors in the onset of the disease

Goals:
• to describe the correlation and interdependence of somatic and psychological states
• to describe the historical development of the psychosomatic concept
• to describe the contributions of Alexander, Selye and others
• to describe the neuroscientific explanation of the influence of somatic and psychological factors on the onset of the disease
• to explain the concept of alexithymia
Outcomes and competences:
• to identify and explain the correlation between somatic and psychological factors in the occurrence of an illness

L2. Patient psychological reactions to the disease

Goals:
• to describe emotional reactions to acute and to chronic illness
• to explain the commonly used defence mechanisms
• to explain the symbolic meanings of certain diseases
• to recognize the consequences of attitudes towards the patients
Outcomes and competences:
• to recognize and explain the importance of attitudes towards disease
- to recognize and describe anxiety
- to identify and describe ways of dealing with anxiety

L3 Patient - doctor relationship

Goals:
• to describe and explain the features of the patient's relationship with the doctor and medical staff
• to recognize patients’ patterns of behaviour and their meaning
Outcomes and competences:
• to identify and describe the psychological response to the disease
• to identify the most visible patients’ defence mechanisms

L4. Relationship Doctor - Patient / Countertransference

Goals
• to describe and explain the doctors’ countertransference reactions
• to recognize the importance of personal attitudes and motivation in creating a relationship with the patient
• to identify communication difficulties arising from countertransference
(Communication with family, reporting bad prognosis or information)
Outcomes and competences:
• to identify personal attitudes and prejudices towards the patient and the illness
• to identify empathy in relation to the patient

L5. Psychosomatic illnesses

Goals:
• to emphasize the differences between somatization and psychosomatic reaction
• to explain neurobiological and psychological mechanisms in the development of psychosomatic diseases
Outcomes and competences:
• to explain somatic symptoms as a reflection of the mental state

Seminars list (with titles and explanation):

S1. Mental mechanisms (anxiety, defence mechanisms, dissociation, aggression, depression)

Goals:
• to know the sources, mechanisms, and presentation of anxiety
• to know the most common defence mechanisms patient use
(Projection, regression, negation, denial, idealization)
• to know the mechanisms of dissociative reactions
• to identify the basic features and purpose of depression and aggression
Outcomes and competences:
• to recognize anxiety in the patient, and the ways of overcoming it
• to identify defence patterns in patient

S2. Mental trauma and stress:

Goals:
• to know the stress response mechanism
• to understand the characteristics of stressors and their significance for the development of normal and pathological reactions
Outcomes and competences:
• to recognize the influence of stress in developing and maintaining a disease

S3. Pain

Goals:
• to know the mechanisms that affect the subjective experience of pain
Outcomes and competences:
• Identify the influence of objective and subjective in experience of pain

S4. Communication doctor-patient, empathy:

Goals:
• to know the communication patterns between the medical staff and patients.
• to identify the styles of communication and communication channels
Outcomes and competences:
• to recognize the importance of communication between doctors and patients

S5. Medical team

Goals:
• to know the features of a functional and dysfunctional team
• to know the importance of teamwork in medicine
Outcomes and competences:
• to identify the features of functional and dysfunctional teams

Practicals list (with titles and explanation):

P1-P4

The aim is to recognize the psychological components of various diseases and the ways in which the patients adapt to their illness. The exercises will be held at different clinics, by schedule. With the help of the tutor, the students will talk to the patients. The emphasis is on the recognition of different stressors that result in the onset of the disease. recognition of stress due to hospitalization and stress resulting from the patient role. Exercises are performed at surgical, internist, gynaecological, paediatric, infectious, oncological, dermatological, neurological, psychiatric clinics and at the Institute of Palliative Care. The outcome of the exercises is to recognize the significance of the psychological component of the disease and to become acquainted with the spectrum of psychological reactions of the patient.
Expected competencies are:
• to establish appropriate communication with the patient

• to identify the emotional state of the patient
• to identify an emotional reaction to a surgical procedure
• to identify signs of fear and anxiety
• to know how to deal with disability issues
• to identify and deal with difficulties in contact with the patient
• to recognize the role of psychological in the appearance of somatic illness
• to identify reactions to severe illness, dying and death
• to identify the specifics in communication and work with children
• to adopt ethics in clinical practice

P5-P8

The aim is to recognize the psychological components of various diseases and the ways in which the patients adapt to their illness. The exercises will be held at different clinics, by schedule. With the help of the tutor, the students will talk to the patients. The emphasis is on the recognition of different stressors that result in the onset of the disease. recognition of stress due to hospitalization and stress resulting from the patient role. Exercises are performed at surgical, internist, gynaecological, paediatric, infectious, oncological, dermatological, neurological, psychiatric clinics and at the Institute of Palliative Care. The outcome of the exercises is to recognize the significance of the psychological component of the disease and to become acquainted with the spectrum of psychological reactions of the patient.
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• to identify and deal with difficulties in contact with the patient
• to recognize the role of psychological in the appearance of somatic illness
• to identify reactions to severe illness, dying and death
• to identify the specifics in communication and work with children
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The aim is to recognize the psychological components of various diseases and the ways in which the patients adapt to their illness. The exercises will be held at different clinics, by schedule. With the help of the tutor, the students will talk to the patients. The emphasis is on the recognition of different stressors that result in the onset of the disease. recognition of stress due to hospitalization and stress resulting from the patient role. Exercises are performed at surgical, internist, gynaecological, paediatric, infectious, oncological, dermatological, neurological, psychiatric clinics and at the Institute of Palliative Care. The outcome of the exercises is to recognize the significance of the psychological component of the disease and to become acquainted with the spectrum of psychological reactions of the patient.
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• to establish appropriate communication with the patient
• to identify the emotional state of the patient
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• to identify signs of fear and anxiety
• to know how to deal with disability issues
• to identify and deal with difficulties in contact with the patient
• to recognize the role of psychological in the appearance of somatic illness
• to identify reactions to severe illness, dying and death
• to identify the specifics in communication and work with children
• to adopt ethics in clinical practice

P13-P16

The aim is to recognize the psychological components of various diseases and the ways in which the patients adapt to their illness. The exercises will be held at different clinics, by schedule. With the help of the tutor, the students will talk to the patients. The emphasis is on the recognition of different stressors that result in the onset of the disease. recognition of stress due to hospitalization and stress resulting from the patient role. Exercises are performed at surgical, internist, gynaecological, paediatric, infectious, oncological, dermatological, neurological, psychiatric clinics and at the Institute of Palliative Care. The outcome of the exercises is to recognize the significance of the psychological component of the disease and to become acquainted with the spectrum of psychological reactions of the patient.
Expected competencies are:
• to establish appropriate communication with the patient
• to identify the emotional state of the patient

• to identify an emotional reaction to a surgical procedure
• to identify signs of fear and anxiety
• to know how to deal with disability issues
• to identify and deal with difficulties in contact with the patient
• to recognize the role of psychological in the appearance of somatic illness
• to identify reactions to severe illness, dying and death
• to identify the specifics in communication and work with children
• to adopt ethics in clinical practice

P17-P20

The aim is to recognize the psychological components of various diseases and the ways in which the patients adapt to their illness. The exercises will be held at different clinics, by schedule. With the help of the tutor, the students will talk to the patients. The emphasis is on the recognition of different stressors that result in the onset of the disease. recognition of stress due to hospitalization and stress resulting from the patient role. Exercises are performed at surgical, internist, gynaecological, paediatric, infectious, oncological, dermatological, neurological, psychiatric clinics and at the Institute of Palliative Care. The outcome of the exercises is to recognize the significance of the psychological component of the disease and to become acquainted with the spectrum of psychological reactions of the patient.
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• to identify signs of fear and anxiety
• to know how to deal with disability issues
• to identify and deal with difficulties in contact with the patient
• to recognize the role of psychological in the appearance of somatic illness
• to identify reactions to severe illness, dying and death
• to identify the specifics in communication and work with children
• to adopt ethics in clinical practice

Student obligations:

Regular attendance, preparing assignments for seminars and practicals.

Exam (exam taking, description of the written/oral/practical part of the exam, point distribution, grading criteria):

Student grading will be conducted according to the Ordinance on Student Grading at the Faculty of Medicine in Rijeka. The student's work is evaluated on the midterm (50%) and final exam (50%).

The midterm exam is written test with multiple responses, and it will be held after the last (5.) practical. Maximum is 50 points; the minimum for passing the exam is 25 points.

Students can only retake the midterm exam if they have not achieve the minimum score, or if they didn't approach the exam. The retake of the exam is determined in schedule.

Only students who gain 25 or more points on the midterm exames can take the final exam.
Students who have gained less than 25 points or were absent from more than 30% of teaching contents (ie 30% of lectures, 30% of the seminars, 30% of exercises) - can not take the final exam.

The final exam is oral, maximum gain is 50 points, the minimum for passing the final exam is 25 points.
The final exam is consisted of verbal examination of theoretical knowledge presented during course.
The final evaluation is done according to the number of points collected through midterm and final exam in the following way:
90-100 points ..... excellent (5) A; 90-100%
75-89 points ..... very good (4) B; 75 to 89%
60-74 points ..... good (3) C; 60-74%
50-59 points ..... sufficient (2) D; 50-59%
0-49 points ..... insufficient (1) F; 0-49%

Other notes (related to the course) important for students:

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COURSE HOURS 2025/2026

Psychological medicine II

Lectures (Place and time or group)	**Practicals** (Place and time or group)	**Seminars** (Place and time or group)
02.04.2026		
izv.prof.dr. sc. Kaštelan Ana, dr. med. [224]		
07.04.2026		
naslovna asistentica Brozan Sanja, dr. med. [356] · naslovni asistent Muminović Mersad, dr. med. [1493] · dr.sc. Rebić Jelena, dr. med. [226] · asistentica Stanivuk Ilijana, dr. med. [446]		
09.04.2026		
doc. dr. sc. Blažević Zelić Sandra, dr. med. [358] · izv.prof.dr. sc. Kaštelan Ana, dr. med. [224] · doc.dr.sc. Pavešić Radonja Aristea, dr. med. [447]		
13.04.2026		
doc. dr. sc. Blažević Zelić Sandra, dr. med. [358] · doc.dr.sc. Pavešić Radonja Aristea, dr. med. [447]		
14.04.2026		
naslovna asistentica Brozan Sanja, dr. med. [356] · naslovni asistent Muminović Mersad, dr. med. [1493] · dr.sc. Rebić Jelena, dr. med. [226] · asistentica Stanivuk Ilijana, dr. med. [446]		
16.04.2026		
izv.prof.dr. sc. Kaštelan Ana, dr. med. [224]		
20.04.2026		
doc. dr. sc. Blažević Zelić Sandra, dr. med. [358] · doc.dr.sc. Pavešić Radonja Aristea, dr. med. [447]		
21.04.2026		
naslovna asistentica Brozan Sanja, dr. med. [356] · naslovni asistent Muminović Mersad, dr. med. [1493] · dr.sc. Rebić Jelena, dr. med. [226] · asistentica Stanivuk Ilijana, dr. med. [446]		
23.04.2026		
izv.prof.dr. sc. Kaštelan Ana, dr. med. [224]		
27.04.2026		
doc. dr. sc. Blažević Zelić Sandra, dr. med. [358] · doc.dr.sc. Pavešić Radonja Aristea, dr. med. [447]		
28.04.2026		
naslovna asistentica Brozan Sanja, dr. med. [356] · naslovni asistent Muminović Mersad, dr. med. [1493] · dr.sc. Rebić Jelena, dr. med. [226]		
30.04.2026		
izv.prof.dr. sc. Kaštelan Ana, dr. med. [224]		
05.05.2026		
asistentica Stanivuk Ilijana, dr. med. [446]		
11.05.2026		

doc. dr. sc. Blažević Zelić Sandra, dr. med. [358] · doc.dr.sc. Pavešić Radonja Aristea, dr. med. [447]		
12.05.2026		
naslovna asistentica Brozan Sanja, dr. med. [356] · naslovni asistent Muminović Mersad, dr. med. [1493] · dr.sc. Rebić Jelena, dr. med. [226] · asistentica Stanivuk Ilijana, dr. med. [446]		

List of lectures, seminars and practicals:

LECTURES (TOPIC)	Number of hours	Location
L1. Physical and psychological factors in the onset of the disease	1	
L2. Patient psychological reactions to the disease	1	
L3 Patient - doctor relationship	1	
L4. Relationship Doctor - Patient / Countertransference	1	
L5. Psychosomatic illnesses	1	

PRACTICALS (TOPIC)	Number of hours	Location
P1-P4	4	
P5-P8	4	
P9-P12	4	
P13-P16	4	
P17-P20	4	

SEMINARS (TOPIC)	Number of hours	Location
S1. Mental mechanisms (anxiety, defence mechanisms, dissociation, aggression, depression)	2	
S2. Mental trauma and stress:	2	
S3. Pain	2	
S4. Communication doctor-patient, empathy:	2	
S5. Medical team	2	

EXAM DATES (final exam):

1.	19.05.2026.
2.	17.06.2026.
3.	06.07.2026.
4.	10.09.2026.