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## **THE LABORATORY OF INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF QUALITY OF LIFE (QoL Lab): Best practice in research, education, prevention and intervention.**

The Laboratory of Interdisciplinary Approaches for the Enhancement of Quality of Life (QoL Lab) was established in November 2015 and it is affiliated at the School of Health and Welfare Services of the Technological Educational Institute of Crete. Its basic aim is the enhancement of quality of life for people in sickness and health, through an interdisciplinary approach. Human health, care delivery and quality of life can be more comprehensively examined and understood by using multidisciplinary approaches rather than a single disciplinary approach.<sup>1</sup> This appears to be a necessity for funding organizations too.<sup>2</sup> Drawing from five different disciplines (i.e., nursing, social work, psychology, dietetics/nutrition and informatics) the unification and integration of different epistemological perspectives results in a holistic or systemic viewpoint.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, an interdisciplinary approach to research, education, prevention and intervention in the areas of health and social care is accomplished.<sup>4</sup>

The basic research team of the QoL Lab share common goals and philosophy, deriving from the biopsychosocial model.<sup>5,6</sup> This model, in contrast to the traditional biomedical one, assumes that both health and illness are the result of the interaction of biological, psychological and social factors. It further attempts to explicate issues of health and illness and provide multidimensional treatment and care, acknowledging patient's unique biological, psychological and social context.<sup>7,8</sup> In this respect, health promotion and enhancement of quality of life is a collective effort bringing together professionals from different disciplines.

The main research areas of the QoL Lab are its members' five fields of expertise: In the field of Psychology promoting healthy lifestyle for people and make them understand what makes life most worth living, through the pursuit of happiness, well-being, and positivity are main research goals.<sup>9,10</sup>

Issues of equality, care, communication and promoting well-being through effective social policy strategies are of major importance for the field of social care. Promoting well-being through social policy and social work involves the assessment of health needs and community care, chronic patients' quality of life as well as professionals' training needs and training of health and social care professionals.

The Lab's activities in the field of nursing mainly focus on promoting best practices and quality of care.<sup>11</sup> Issues of health services' management, public health, evaluation and evidence-based practice, nursing education and health professionals' training are some of the main research interests for the field of nursing.<sup>12</sup>

In the field of nutrition, health and well-being associated to healthy eating and preventing chronic diseases through screening and research. Healthy dietary approaches and quality of life involves epidemiology of obesity, diabetes, dyslipidemia and other chronic diseases, nutritional risk screening and therapeutic diet for malnutrition, and nutrigenetics for personalised nutrition care.

Last but not least, informatics focus on development of customized e-health services and on management systems of quality life. Promoting quality of life for people with chronic diseases by using smart systems and high technology and supporting the elderly through information technology are some of the issues under investigation in the field of informatics.

Concluding, the current trends in research dictate the formation of interdisciplinary research teams and approaches, through which, more cohesive and robust research designs can be accomplished. Implementation of such research designs may provide integrated results that lead to interventions with maximum benefit to the population.

A number of research projects and continuing education programs have already been implemented under the auspices of the QoL Lab, either as coordinator or partner. Currently, various collaborations have been developed and new projects have been designed and carried out by leading members of the QoL Lab. These can be found in the website of the lab. Extending the basic multidisciplinary team and outside collaborations, attracting funding opportunities, and implementing innovative research, educational, prevention and intervention projects are the future plans of the lab.

**QoL Lab's basic team:**

Dr. Argyroula Kalaitzaki, Assistant Professor in Clinical Psychology, Head of the Lab

Dr. Sofia Koukoulis, Assistant Professor in Social Policy

Dr. Areti Stavropoulou, Assistant Professor, Nursing Department

Dr. Michail Rovithis, Lecturer in Applied Nursing

Nikolaos Rikos, Lecturer in Applied Nursing

**Associated Members of the QoL Lab**

Dr. Anastasia Markaki, Assistant Professor in Clinical Nutrition

Dr. Manolis Tsiknakis, Associate Professor in Electrical Engineering

Nota bene: A number of external collaborators coming from different disciplines have been affiliated to and collaborate with the QoL Lab.

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