Chapter 3

THE ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS IN HEALTH AND ILLNESS: THE APPLICATION AND FUTURE DIRECTION OF HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY IN MALAYSIA

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This aim of this chapter is to introduce health psychology as a branch of applied psychology in Malaysia. The chapter is divided into the following sections: (1) overview of health psychology; (2) literature review on psychological factors associated with health and illness-related behaviors; (3) health and illness in Malaysia; (4) major landmarks of health psychology in Malaysia; and (5) coronary heart disease among Malaysians referring to a study on the relationship between psychological factors and outcomes. The rationale for addressing coronary heart disease (CHD) is multifold: (i) CHD is the leading mortality factor in Malaysian government hospitals; (ii) the onset and progression of CHD is influenced by modifiable health-related behaviors; and (iii) cardiac rehabilitation programs in Malaysia need to take into account the specific psychological needs of Malaysian