

From the Book Review Editor

THIS REVIEW SECTION covers a diverse collection of recent health reports, web sites and book reviews from the fields of nutrition and dietetics and social work. I am sure the links and book reviews will provide you with useful information and add to the understanding of a wide range of contemporary health policy and management issues.

Dr Gary E Day
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Report watch

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has released a number of recent reports on aspects of health care in Australia. These reports may be purchased directly from the AIHW or can be downloaded as a pdf.

National palliative care performance indicators: results of the 2006 performance indicator data collection. <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10498>

National Diabetes Register: statistical profile 1999–2005. <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10489>

Medical indemnity national data collection public sector 2005–06. <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10479>

Older Australians in hospital. <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10418>

National indicators for monitoring diabetes: Report of the Diabetes Indicators Review Subcommittee of the National Diabetes Data Working Group. <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10478>

Comorbidity of cardiovascular disease, diabetes and chronic kidney disease in Australia. <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10423>

Alcohol and other drug treatment services in New South Wales 2005–06: findings from the National Minimum Data Set. <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10433> (Similar reports are available for each state and territory.)

An interesting site that may be of use to academics, researchers, students and those interested in world health trends and statistics is the Population Reference Bureau (<http://www.prb.org/>). PRB provides useful statistics, graphs and commentary on subject areas such as: ageing; education; poverty; HIV/AIDS; health; reproductive health; youth; housing; environment; migration; and gender. Well worth a look, and you can subscribe to a list server for regular automatic updates.

Book reviews

Social work, health and international development. Compassion in social policy and practice
Dumont S, St-Onge M (eds)
Haworth Press, 2007
ISBN: 978-0-7890-3512-7. xvii + 278 pages

THE TEXT IS AN INTERESTING collection of chapters that address a range of global social work issues. Each chapter is a “free-standing” quantitative and qualitative research article or commentary and is published simultaneously as *Social Work in Health Care* Vol. 44, Nos. 1, 2 and 3 2007, with each chapter available online from the publisher.

The text is divided into subject area themes that cover compassion and solidarity; HIV/AIDS; ageing; and practice. Chapters cover social work and health issues such as cultural competence in dealing with HIV prevention and care; promoting the psychosocial health of the elderly; best practice case management for improved medical adherence; and physicians’ ability to influence the lifestyle behaviors of diabetic patients: implications for social work.

What is pleasing about this text is that it covers a range of global cultural, diversity, human rights and social issues from chapters that deal specifically with topics such as working with language and cultural barriers with expatri-



ate Chinese patients in US hospitals; HIV patients in Israel; and social work in Finland.

The text offers the reader a wide range of contemporary social work issues in a relatively easy reading style. While there are no specific chapters or arti-

cles from Australia, there is enough here for the local reader to gain interesting insights into social work practice and issues facing the profession from a wider global context. A number of the chapters could easily be used to inform practice in Australia.

The text also gives insights into the impact of technology and e-health on the provision of health care and support through issues such as “clinical practice standards and ethical issues applied to a virtual group intervention for spousal caregivers of people with Alzheimer’s”.

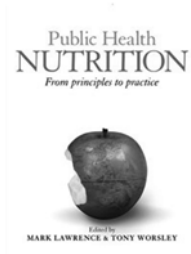
Overall, a useful collection of related social work topics that emphasise compassion and ethical practice issues.

Reviewer rating: ★★★★★

Dr Gary E Day
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Australian Health Review

Public health nutrition: from principles to practice
Lawrence M, Worsley T (eds)
Allen & Unwin, 2007
ISBN: 978 1 74175 102 4. RRP: \$69.95. 492 pages.

THIS IS A SIGNIFICANT text on public health nutrition, led by Australian public health nutritionists and including contributions by a number of international experts. The editors, Mark Lawrence and Tony Worsley, are professors of nutrition at Deakin University, and their contributors are academics, largely from the Australian Public Health Nutrition Academic Consortium but also from Europe, New Zealand,



the United States, United Kingdom and South Africa. The foreword statement by Professor Basil Hetzel arguing that this book breaks new ground for the 21st century is certainly true, as substantial challenges await public health nutrition scientists.

Epidemics of obesity, as well as micronutrient deficiencies and malnutrition, are now recognised political and economic issues, as well as health ones.

The book is set out in four sections covering principles, populations, priorities and practices, and the public health focus embraces eco-nutrition and sustainability, as well as the more traditional concepts of nutritional deficiency, nutrition standards and dietary guideline principles.

In principles, the editors together with Mark Wahlqvist cover the guiding principles of public health nutrition, including emerging research, new knowledge and the change in focus of dietary guidelines and nutrition standards. Unfortunately, a thorough analysis of the differences in government legislation and policy affecting food standards is missing from this section, as well as the recent inclusion of Specific Dietary Targets (SDT) for the prevention of chronic disease.

The section on populations covers the nutrition issues facing different life-stage groups such as children and adolescents, mothers and infants and older adults. The section on priorities covers economically, geographically and socially disadvantaged groups, indigenous communities, obesity prevention, international nutrition and global developments in the food system. Practices include monitoring the food and nutrition situation of populations, physical activity, research skills, professional practice, project management, promotion and communication, policy and politics.

Some sections are excellent, particularly those on children and adolescents, the political debate about obesity, dealing with indigenous communities, and international health. The sections on older adults and food security among disadvantaged communities are also well done. The referencing is detailed and particularly useful.

The editors have done a formidable job in bringing together such a diverse range of experts in public health nutrition, however, while this is strength, it is also a weakness. The authors state that each chapter can stand alone but also is

linked to other chapters. At times, the book does not flow and the reader is left to wonder why, for instance, physical activity appears in practices but is not linked to obesity in priorities. For more experienced nutrition scientists, the variation in relevance and complexity between chapters is evident. For instance, the section on mothers and infants does not address the issues of obesity in early life and the growing prevalence of gestational diabetes, or the controversy surrounding the Barker hypothesis. There is little mention of partnerships between primary health care agencies and communities in tackling the epidemic of chronic disease, nor the role of the food industry in influencing public health outcomes.

As a text for undergraduate students, more integration on monitoring, research and project management would have allowed better application for teaching purposes in public health nutrition. The book would be improved if it linked public health nutrition policy and practice to evidence-based frameworks which show the overlap between primary, secondary and tertiary prevention in health from a policy and practice perspective, as well as a chronic disease focus.

The promotional blurb states that the book is an essential resource for practitioners, researchers and administrators as well as students. While many chapters would appeal to all in varying ways, the variations in depth and focus and the lack of continuity make it less useful for researchers and administrators. Perhaps a clearer focus for the second edition would assist in its uptake. Despite this, the book makes a welcome contribution to the exercise of public health nutrition policy and is well worth the price of around \$70.

Reviewer rating: ★★★★★☆

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