

Health Promotion Throughout the Life Span

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This text book, currently in its 7th edition, brings together contributions from a collective of nursing educators in nine American states. The United States provides the book's audience and the bulk of the material. The content is clearly linked to recent US health policy documents, although health environments worldwide are recognised as important contributors to the health of individuals in America. The book is pitched to undergraduate clinical nursing students and additional resources for students and instructors are noted at the beginning of each chapter via a link to the publisher's expanded website.

The book's "individual health determinants" orientation to health promotion is clear from the outset. The preface declares that public concern about physical fitness, good nutrition and avoidance of health hazards such as smoking, all key to improving health, are "ingrained in the American lifestyle". The 10 important categories identified as important determinants of health status, including family relationships, risk management and coping, all describe individual behaviours over which individuals are assumed to exercise control. The role of improved access and reduced costs of health services in minimising health risks, improving health behaviours and providing intervention measures to improve quality of life for all people, are also emphasised. This is a reasonable priority in the American context which lacks universal health care coverage, but does not acknowledge that there is limited evidence that improved health outcomes can be attributed to better availability of acute health services.

This focus on individual behaviours and health service factors in health promotion is consistent with the tasks of nurse clinicians of providing health information and primary and secondary prevention programs including immunisation, screening and counselling. However, the book gives limited acknowledgement of the key social determinants of health, such as socioeconomic position, gender, place or working conditions in its opening conceptualisation. In later chapters,

treatment of gender is limited to disaggregation of life stage-specific data by sex, and discussion of gender influences in specific health problems such as violence against women. Similarly, economic factors are acknowledged as contributing to poor health in African Americans, but the lack of a broader underpinning description of the socioeconomic determinants of health problems, which are applicable to all populations, creates the risk of perpetuating a clinical environment that blames the victim and is inimical to health promotion.

The book has several strengths. The first chapter provides a clear description of health promotion theory and the variety of nursing roles within this framework. The chapter on ethics and health promotion is a comprehensive and accessible account of theories of caring, professional accountability, advocacy, prevention, autonomy and self-determination, informed consent, confidentiality and justice. Similarly, the second unit on assessment for health promotion is a good introduction to the individual, family and community levels of health promotion action. The interventions for health promotion unit describes the nurses' role in screening, education, nutrition, exercise and stress management for individuals, and there is a comprehensive overview of health and development from conception to the ageing adult that highlights stage-specific needs and opportunities for health promotion activities. Chapters on emerging populations discuss health needs and cultural practices of minorities and immigrants in the US, and the health policy and delivery section, while comprehensive, is specific to America.

Each chapter begins with a list of objectives to be addressed. Also included is case material that encourages the student to face the scope and complexity of the questions posed, and to envisage the reality of the clinical environment. There is helpful presentation of chunks of information in boxes separate from the text, including 'Hot Topics', 'Research highlights', 'Multi-cultural awareness', as well as case studies and care plans. This breaks up the text and is inviting to the reader. The tables and figures are generally clear and appropriate. Reference lists of up-to-date material are provided at the end of each chapter and there is a comprehensive index.

This is a book with an ambitious agenda. It presents a comprehensive introduction to the roles of primary healthcare nurses in prevention of disease and injury and health promotion, is supported by a range of relevant theory, current policy context, extensive biopsychosocial content and additional resources. Given the clinical orientation of the textbook, its application to public health theory and practice is limited, as is its use in Australian schools and universities because of its American relevance and its narrow social determinants perspective.