

Understanding health promotion

Edited By Helen Keleher, Colin MacDougall, Berni Murphy. Published by Oxford University Press London (UK) 2007. Paperback 393pp. ISBN: 978-0-19-555294-2. RRP A\$69.95.

Reviewed by Ilse O'Ferrall, School of Medicine, University of Notre Dame Australia, Western Australia

This is a book to be used as a reference on the theory and practice of health promotion. It provides a number of titles of guidebooks that lead the reader to background information about particular aspects of health promotion and then provides a number of websites for further resources.

The strength of this book is its emphasis on the social and ecological aspects of health promotion and collaboration with sectors outside the health industry. This makes the book a valuable addition to the literature. Even though the authors optimistically consider that the emphasis on behavioural strategies can now be incorporated in an ecological framework, I suspect that many government departments, while paying lip service to such a framework, continue to practice a limited behavioural social marketing approach.

This book doesn't really bring anything new to the field of health promotion. What it does do is to bring health promotion much more strongly into a social determinants framework and spends many chapters on the importance of moving beyond the behavioural social marketing strategies of the 1980s and 1990s. Collaboration, human rights culture, empowerment are words that signal such a change. A social model of health moves beyond simplistic behaviour change models to an analysis of lived experiences of individuals and communities where health promotion practitioners become facilitators of change rather than drivers or leaders. There is a recognition that health promotion practitioners cannot work in isolation and many determinants of health lie outside the health sector. This means there is a need to work with organisations and structures beyond the traditional.

The book declares itself to be written for the student of health promotion. However, due to the complexity of working in a collaborative ecological framework, it is not for the beginner. To really understand the basics of adult learning theory, health promotion theory, communication skills and such like, the student will require additional resources beyond what this book offers.

Each chapter deals with different aspects of health promotion theory and practice. Although the book purports to be easy to follow, it is more of a reference guide and pointer to other resources.

This book goes beyond being a first year health promotion textbook. It deals with the complexity of human life. There are other texts that spell out the basics of health promotion theory, communication, planning, implementation and evaluation. These are slightly covered in this book, but the serious student will have to go further afield. Starting with a human rights cultural perspective is a breath of fresh air. I am hopeful that eventually funding will be provided in sufficient quantity to allow practitioners to work collaboratively with other sectors to promote population health. When/if this happens, this book will be a valuable tool in the health promotion practitioner's work kit. It is a sobering reality check for the health promotion practitioner, who has little influence over improving health, unless he/she engages more broadly with other sectors.

There are many tables and figures to illustrate theory. The content is quite comprehensive, however the dark background in the tables and the eleven guidebooks make them quite difficult to read.

The extensive bibliography, including many websites, underline that this is a reference book for the practitioner who wants to work in a broad sphere of practice using the social determinants of health as the basis of that work.

Understanding health promotion is recommended for the advanced student of health promotion. It may be worth providing a copy to each government health department in Australia to remind staff that effective health promotion can only be achieved by acknowledging the reality of social determinants of health and practising in that way.

Foundations for Health Promotion (Third edition)

By Jennie Naidoo and Jane Wills. Published by Bailliere Tindall Elsevier 2009. Paperback, 306 pp. plus index. ISBN: 9780702029653 RRP \$65.

Reviewed by Michael Sparks, Vice President for Strategy and Governance, International Union for Health Promotion and Education

The third edition of *Foundations for Health Promotion* presents an updated and easily accessible introduction to the basics of the discipline. Readers will find a logically laid out text with useful examples, activities and discussion points highlighted throughout. The activities and discussion points provide potential for the text to be augmented in classroom settings or through independent learning.

Divided into four parts, the book provides critical coverage of theories of health promotion, strategies and methods utilised in promoting health, multiple settings approaches and implementation issues including assessment, planning and evaluation. The third edition updates each section to reflect developments in health promotion since the last revision in 2000.

The text in this book flows smoothly and is well illustrated with figures, charts and diagrams. While many of the health system references and political comments in the book are British, international readers will be pleased to note the wealth of international examples used to illustrate application of the principles covered in the book. Australian readers will be particularly pleased with the number of illustrative examples from our continent.

A most attractive feature of the writing is the frank and direct commentary on the limitations associated with some health promotion methods and problems that are common in health promotion practice. These caveats are critical to the development of a realistic picture of the need for multiple strategies and strong evaluation to effectively promote health. They reflect the complexities associated with health promotion as a discipline and will better prepare readers to think both analytically and constructively as they make their way in the field.

For example, the section on community development and health promotion provides a brief but useful history and background that does not shy away from commentary on the political realities of using the approach. This is an important lesson for earnest beginners. It continues with a discussion of principles underpinning community development and examples of activities common to the approach. The refreshing chart of advantages and disadvantages to community development provides a critical list that should be carefully considered when utilising this approach. The conclusion of this chapter directly addresses the difficulties that many governmental agencies have with community development. At the same time, the authors support broader outlooks from these agencies and an increased willingness to engage with community development.

It is this honest and balanced approach that will help readers to understand how pragmatic health promotion workers have to be and how frequently the focus of their work is influenced by factors and players that are beyond their control. Providing this information can lead to workers more critically analysing the context in which they work and developing strategies to influence the strategic directions of their work and the approaches they take. Effective health promotion often requires workers to direct their focus both internally within

their organisations as well as externally to clients, patients or community members.

A common flaw in books that attempt to provide coverage of a broad range of elements of a discipline is an unfortunate lack of depth on any particular issue. This book attempts to counter that flaw with relevant examples, stimulating discussion points and activities that encourage readers to independently dig deeper into issues of interest. These, combined with suggested further readings and relevant references, assist the reader to direct their own learning according to their individual needs.

If we believe that 'Health Promotion is Everybody's Business' then this book will clearly help more people to understand the fundamentals of that business and to see their particular place in doing it. This book is recommended for workers in health, education and social welfare who engage in health promotion as part of their duties. It is particularly recommended for those new to the field of health promotion and those studying the basics of the discipline. Readers with a good understanding of the basics of health promotion practice may find this a useful reference or may be drawn to the authors' companion text, *Public Health and Health Promotion, Developing Practice* from the same publishers.

Population Health, Communities and Health Promotion

Edited by Sansnee Jirojwong, Pranee Liamputtong. Published by Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2008. Paperback 344 pages plus index. ISBN 9780195560558. RRP \$69.95

Reviewed by Craig Fry, Murdoch Childrens Research Institute and University of Melbourne

There are many books that have been written on the topics of population health, health promotion and community health. Sansnee Jirojwong and Pranee Liamputtong add to this growing library of resources with their highly readable and accessible text, the back cover of which proclaims to be the first such book to cover these topics together.

Edited books, particularly in a field such as public health where there exist diverse cultures, perspectives and practices, can sometimes suffer from lack of clarity and cohesion around guiding themes and principles. This book is not one of these.

As Editors and also contributing authors, Jirojwong and Liamputtong bring together 15 chapters across five major