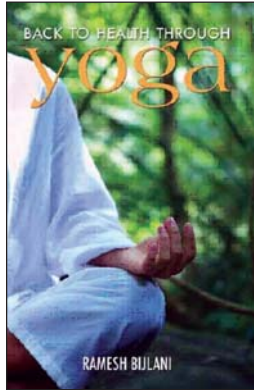


Book Reviews

Back to Health through Yoga. Ramesh L. Bijlani. Rupa, New Delhi, 2008. 329 pp, ₹295. ISBN 978-81-291-1397-9.



In a reductionist world of prevention and cure, it is always refreshing to bear witness to holistic approaches to health. The practice of allopathic medicine is seen as prescriptive and sometimes too much so. Alternative approaches to health, such as yoga, have taken root in the general consciousness and culture. However, too often, these alternative approaches are seen as a universal solution and cure for all problems. In this context, a critical review of the claims made by yoga in relation to physical health will show that some are inadequately substantiated. While no one can deny the hope yoga offers for health, it is nevertheless clear that a moderate voice is required to critically analyse the benefits of yoga. Since there are misperceptions on both sides of the health-provider divide, only someone who has straddled this divide can amalgamate the physical, mental and spiritual health solutions offered by yoga with the modern evidence base that guides decision making in clinical and public health. The mind-body interface is always at the core of *Back to Health through Yoga*. The book, written by an eminent physiologist and nutritionist, provides a refreshing and gentle perspective. It is important to read the preface, as in it the author delineates his view of health and yoga, and tells us what to expect, for example, 'reasoned and reasonable guidelines for a healthy lifestyle'.

Perhaps the greatest service the book does is simply, to be sensible. The first chapter demystifies yoga and is very useful to the layman. For example, it distinguishes between the yogic attitude and yogic practice. To many, the face of yoga has become the performance of certain physical manoeuvres; the author points out that if the sum of yoga were only this, then it would be akin to physiotherapy. The deeper spiritual quest is explored, albeit in less detail than the actual physical yogic practices, such as *asanas*. As one finishes this chapter, there is a thirst to know more, particularly about the roots and spiritual nature of yoga, and the list of further reading at the end of the chapter comes in handy.

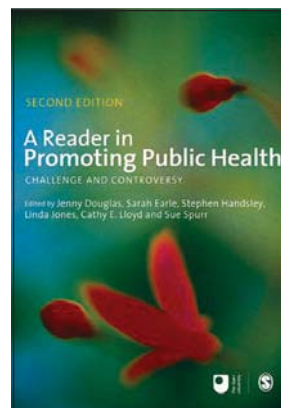
The rest of the book explores health-related conditions that are within the common man's lexicon. In all chapters, there is a short note on the interaction between yoga and that particular condition. This section is always short, but it is balanced. However, one could have wished for more as far as this section is concerned, not particularly in a prescriptive manner, but in a broader manner. The author could have expanded on the balanced view of the role of yoga in particular health conditions. There is also a section called 'frequently asked questions' with answers, which increases the usefulness of the book. Considering the large volume of information, it would be useful to have an index to facilitate rapid and easy access.

This is not a cerebral book, but a reassuring look at yoga through the prism of health and from the perspective of physiology and nutrition. Taking a bird's eye view, it brings to the fore two important conclusions: first, that there is more to yoga than

physical postures, and second, that while yoga probably has a tremendous potential for the prevention of most lifestyle-related health conditions, it is not a substitute for proven curative principles in allopathic medicine. The reader might want to know a little more about the balance of evidence, from a modern scientific perspective. By creating the need for more knowledge, the book achieves its aim of being for the 'intelligent and inquisitive reader who will use it to discover the roots of health and disease'. It is, however, in the words of the author, no substitute for a teacher, but a very well-written introduction to yoga for the uninitiated. It is practical, gentle and down to earth. The biggest service done by the book is that it gives us a glimpse of a doorway to the world beyond physical well-being. As has been famously said, for one who is moderate in eating, recreation, working, sleeping and waking, yoga destroys all sorrow.

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A Reader in Promoting Public Health: Challenge and controversy. Jenny Douglas, Sarah Earle, Stephen Handsley, Linda J. Jones, Cathy E. Lloyd, Sue Spurr (eds). Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2010. 304 pp, £21.99. ISBN 978-1-8492-0104-9.



Multi-disciplinary public health is a recent phenomenon, and this book traces the journey of public health over the past few decades to its recent avatar. That you just cannot expect a person to keep healthy without providing a health-promoting social, economic and political environment is the basic contention of this book. The book is recommended for medical colleges, students of preventive medicine, medical and paramedical students and others pursuing public health.

This introductory reader to public health does justice to its objectives and I have not come across a similar book. If it could be made cheaper, I would like to introduce it as a recommended reader for our students of public health. All libraries in health sciences should have this book and, preferably, multiple copies.

Adopting a holistic approach, the book gives an all-round, balanced view of evidence-based practice in the context of public health. It alludes to the foundation science of public health, which is epidemiology, and beautifully balances out its limitations and inadequacies in capturing certain dimensions of public health. For

example, epidemiology marginalizes the social context and downplays the qualitative evidence.

The authors allude to some of the common abuses of epidemiology which lead to deceptive findings. They believe that researchers and practitioners of public health need to have a critical approach to analysing and reporting results of epidemiological studies, which is why they feel that all health workers need to have some knowledge of epidemiology and its limitations. The importance of epidemiology in health promotion, too, is unquestionable, but the authors write that ‘epidemiological information cannot be accepted with blind trust and haste’.

The section on popular epidemiology, a field in which epidemiologists work with the community in social movements or investigate environmental threats, e.g. in relation to cancer, is also well written. This is what is referred to as field epidemiology in India. This section also deals with the ethics of global allocation of health resources. Only 10% of the health research funds worldwide are allocated to the problems of 90% of the world’s burden of disease.

The concept of health promotion is very well described. The book elaborates on how health promotion is different from health education, and how it cuts across disciplines and demands pragmatism. The authors discuss how both health promotion and public health have been theoretically weak but practically strong, and emphasizes that the research and public health fraternity need to understand this. They describe the two distinct traditions of health promotion—the US and the European traditions, and dwell on the differences between the two perspectives. In the USA, it is an enlargement of the concept of health education, with the individual being responsible for himself, irrespective of what the environment is, or provides. In Europe, however, besides the individual, the social, economic and political environment needs to be health-supportive under the umbrella of health promotion. A complete definition of health promotion must incorporate these diverse perspectives. These two traditions do influence the meaning and scope of the evidence of health promotion. The authors have referred to the European continent as ‘the continent’; some readers from India may not understand this term and the authors must consider changing it in the subsequent edition for the sake of the Indian readership.

Part 3 of the book discusses the promotion of public health through health-supporting policies. The Ottawa Charter has had a profound influence on the concept of health promotion and shaping of public health practice in the past 20 years. The question, ‘What would the Ottawa Charter look like were it to be written today?’ is a very interesting reflection of the dynamic nature of public health and health promotion in the 21st century. The importance of policy is extremely well described here.

The chapter on childhood obesity, too, is very well researched and written. Prevention of childhood obesity rather than only reactive treatment is the need of the hour. The authors strongly advocate the prevention of an ‘obesogenic environment’. They also address the problem of anorexia among adolescent urban girls. It would be useful if the next edition contained a small section on the double burden of undernutrition and obesity (overnutrition) in the developing countries.

Terrorism, a critical problem worldwide, has been rightly included in this reader of public health. The authors write how terrorist movements are a response to growing inequity. Terrorism, according to the authors, creates unique challenges for the public health system in terms of planning responses and prevention.

It is not important just to do methodologically appropriate

research, but research must be relevant to the local community and prevent disease and promote the health of the people with their active involvement and participation. The authors elaborate on the value of ‘social capital’ in community development and public health, and stress the need for social responsibility towards health.

The very well-written chapter on the history and reform of mental health is a valuable resource. Many other topics have also been covered.

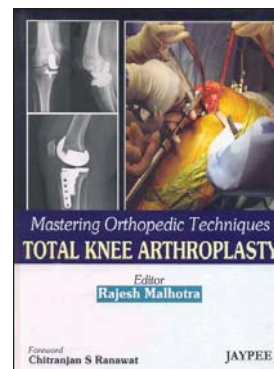
Of course, for the Indian context, it would have been desirable to have examples from India and other developing countries. The authors should think of doing this in the next edition, either by introducing a separate chapter or adding some material. Such an inclusion would make the book comprehensive. (To be fair, however, I should mention that the section on diabetes service users from the South Asian community is very relevant to the Indian context.)

This is an excellent book and all Indian students of public health should read it. It should be made part of the recommended reading. The book is captivating and motivational, and is easy to read. It is also easy to carry. It is a great reader for introducing students, researchers and practitioners alike to public health.

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Mastering Orthopedic Techniques—Total knee arthroplasty. Rajesh Malhotra (ed). Jaypee Publications, New Delhi, 2010. 267 pp, ₹249. ISBN 978-81-8448-894-4.



Rajesh Malhotra has combined with 30 guest contributors to produce his latest book. This is a magnificently illustrated, contemporary publication which avoids verbosity.

The book is thorough, descriptive and written with authority and experience. There is an excellent blend of the text and the brilliantly coloured illustrations. The presentation is both logical and progressive, and the editing has been done

masterfully. The organization of the chapters and paragraphs of the book is visually captivating and faultless.

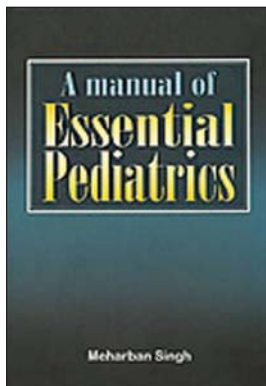
The bibliography which accompanies each chapter is not only exhaustive but also relevant. No effort has been spared by the authors; yet extraneous, unimportant details have been ruthlessly excluded.

This publication makes mandatory reading for all orthopaedic surgeons. Whether they be trainees or consultants, all orthopaedic professionals with even a passing interest in total knee replacement surgery should be familiar with this text.

Professor Malhotra is a man of supreme intellect and an enviable practicality as a surgeon. He is a professor in the largest public hospital in the second largest country on earth. His devotion to education and clinical excellence pervade every page of this offering. Only a man of his stature could amass such a list of contributors and produce such a tome at an eminently affordable price. I could not recommend this text more highly.

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A Manual of Essential Paediatrics. Meharban Singh. Sagar Publications, New Delhi, 2009. 609 pp, ₹625. ISBN 81-7082-097-9.



This book by Professor Meharban Singh has been written to meet the requirements of graduate medical students in paediatrics. It is well written in a lucid and simple style. The book reflects his rich experience in active paediatric practice and teaching.

Paediatrics is now an independent discipline in the medical graduate's curriculum and the Medical Council of India has given recommendations for training in the subject. Professor Singh has written this book keeping

that in mind. Almost all day-to-day problems have been discussed. He has concentrated on certain common topics, such as growth and development, nutrition, fluid and electrolyte balance, immunization and infections. Care of the newborn and emergency paediatrics have been given due importance. The book also discusses systemic paediatrics, giving the basic and relevant information. Adequate coverage is given to national-level programmes.

The general quality of the paper, printing and layout are good. There are plenty of illustrations and tables to explain the subject. Important points and tips have been highlighted. Another important and unique feature of this book is the 'frequently asked questions' (FAQs) at the end of every chapter. The information on practical procedures in paediatric practice, I am sure, will be well appreciated by the readers. The bibliography given at the end of most of the chapters is useful for further reference.

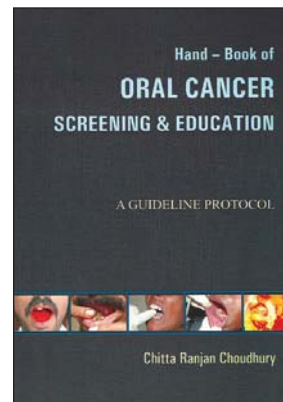
Since this book is meant primarily for graduate students preparing for their examinations, in my opinion, vital statistics could have been discussed in greater detail, with definitions and morbidity and mortality data. The recent WHO recommendation on low osmolar oral rehydration solution could have been mentioned in the chapter on fluid and electrolyte balance. There is a typographical error in the formula given for calculating the weight from the age of the child. These minor issues apart, this

book is excellent reading material. It will be of immense use not only to MB,BS students, but also to interns, nursing students, family physicians and general practitioners.

There are a good number of books on paediatrics for graduate and postgraduate students by Indian authors. This book definitely stands out.

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Hand-Book of Oral Cancer Screening and Education. A guideline protocol. Chitta Ranjan Choudhury. Nitte University, Mangalore, 2010. 116 pp, price not mentioned.



This handbook on oral cancer screening and education is written by Professor Choudhury, who is Director of the Centre for Oral Disease Prevention and Control, Nitte University, Mangalore, India and Professor, Maxillofacial Surgery, Poole NHS Hospital, Bournemouth University, UK. The focus of this book is on tobacco-chewing, oral cancer screening and education of the Indian population on the prevention and control of oral cancer. The contents of the book are divided into two parts.

Part I has 3 sections, the first of which deals with chewable tobacco products and tobacco-chewing habits, oral cancer and pre-cancer lesions. Section 2 contains the KAP (knowledge, attitude and practice) study protocol, while section 3 deals with screening for oral cancer and education for the prevention and control of oral cancer through non-therapeutic intervention. Part II of the book has two sections covering the outcomes of the KAP study conducted by the author in southern India and basic science laboratory research outcomes related to oral pre-cancer and cancer.

The first section contains the details of various chewable tobacco products available in India, including the names, manufacturers and composition of the products. The lacunae in the knowledge of the manufacturers of these products are mentioned. The author emphasizes the ineffectiveness of the tobacco control programme in curbing tobacco chewing. The KAP study protocol, methodology and intervention outcomes have been presented in great detail and these will be of immense help to any researcher planning primary prevention studies for oral cancer. In addition, the book also gives a detailed outline of clinical assessment of the oral cavity and pre-cancerous lesions. This can benefit medical undergraduate and postgraduate students pursuing maxillofacial, dental, general, and head and neck surgery.

One of the highlights of the book is the section on the results of the KAP study of approximately 9000 subjects included for

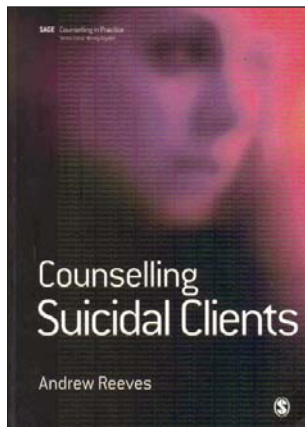
screening, education and assessment of the impact of education on tobacco-chewing habits and oral pre-cancer lesions. The author's experience has proven the feasibility of large-scale, low-cost public health primary prevention strategies for a common cancer that affects the population from the low socioeconomic social strata in a resource-constrained country.

The author has also published the basic science research outcomes related to genetic and molecular biology changes observed in tobacco chewers. Data and outcomes from basic research can be used for planning future research on oral cancer for screening, early detection, prognostication and designing of novel therapeutic interventions.

Overall, the material of the book is well organized and the contents justify the title. The typeface makes for easy reading and the size of the book is convenient. There are a lot of good-quality pictures and illustrations of tobacco products, oral pre-cancer lesions and oral cancer.

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Counselling Suicidal Clients. Andrew Reeves. Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2010. 182 pp, price not mentioned. ISBN 978–1–4129–4636–0.



The author is an experienced social worker and expert counsellor who has worked for many years with different client groups and published a few books on critical issues in counselling and practical methods of counselling. All the books are of high academic value and are professionally useful.

The present book is a very timely publication on a topic that is crucial in the clinical practice of psychiatry. Though the book is written for counsellors, counselling of suicidal clients is a

day-to-day task for psychiatrists, psychologists and nurses, both in out-patient/community and in in-patient settings. Dealing with suicidal clients is a very complex and difficult clinical task. Reeves deals with the topic in a very comprehensive, lucid and pragmatic way that would be helpful for all categories of mental health professionals.

The content of the book is divided into 8 broad parts that contain 19 well-organized chapters. The author has approached different crucial issues involved in counselling from the point of view of practical clinical work, addressed mainly to counsellors in the UK. The first chapter contains a keynote introduction to the counselling process and a description of the structure of the book.

In the second chapter, Reeves discusses the historical perspective of suicide as a medical issue. The third chapter is on suicide trends and statistics—though it is a very concise overview, it hardly touches upon the major findings from developing nations. Except for two graphs on global data, it focuses mainly on statistics from the UK. This chapter also discusses ‘suicide rates and psychopathology’ in a paragraph, which is too brief, and discusses only two studies. This part could have been more interesting if the author had dealt with the issue in a more in-depth manner, mentioning the global research data.

The fourth chapter on ‘suicide risk factors and assessment’ is elaborate; however, a clinically helpful compilation of different risk factors for suicide would be a valuable guide. It contains references to different risk factors for suicide, ranging from socio-demographic factors to psychopathology and biochemical markers to suicide methods. Chapters 5 to 7 deal with policy/ethics and confidentiality and are very valuable good-practice protocols for counselling practice. However, these are mainly relevant to the UK or the European environment. In India, Southeast Asia or Latin America, these issues are dealt with differently. Chapter 8 deals with different organizational settings of counselling, and chapter 9 with procedures and standard guidance documents applicable to the counselling procedure for suicidal patients. Chapter 10 focuses on the ‘understanding of suicide’. It provides a very precise overview of a complex topic and would be a valuable text for any mental health professional in the field who wishes to develop a balanced insight into the issue. Chapter 11 deals with a very sensitive issue in dealing with suicidal clients, viz. the language. The author has very exhaustively tabulated the different expressive languages used by suicidal clients and this listing will be a valuable guide to health professionals for acknowledging the suspicion or risk-index for potential suicidal clients.

Chapter 12 is a useful discourse from the point of view of practical management of suicidal clients. It provides a step-by-step therapeutic approach that helps the client to shift his/her self-destructive motivation towards self-supporting strategies. This account will be very useful for the development of skills in the management of suicidal patients. Chapter 13 deals with a critical issue in suicidology research, viz. the relationship between self-harm with or without suicidal intent. This is a complex psychological issue and warrants careful clinical scrutiny in day-to-day clinical practice. This chapter should help counsellors to develop a balanced understanding of the suicide–self-harm dichotomy. Chapter 14 focuses on counsellors’ self-reflective analyses of suicidal issues in general and for specific clients’ needs.

The emotional impact of suicidal clients on the counsellor during the counselling process is definitely a significant one. In Chapter 15, the author deals with the potential dangers and difficulties of working with suicidal clients. Chapter 16 discusses some of the safety procedures which counsellors should follow during the counselling process. As an extension of this issue, Chapter 17 states the ‘good practice guidelines’ for self-support of the counsellor in the eventuality of the client’s death by suicide. This work hazard faced by counsellors is an important issue and the chapter provides valuable steps to safeguard the mental health of counsellors. The role of supervision is highlighted as an important method for not only professional development but crisis resolution as well. Chapter 18 mentions the specific training needs and skill development of counsellors with regard to the management of suicidal clients, particularly the ‘risk assessment competency’. The last chapter summarizes and gives an overview of the main content of each chapter and also raises a few important

future clinical questions so far as the ongoing development of counselling work and suicidal risk is concerned.

The organization of the book is methodical and reflects the practical step-by-step clinical issues that a counselling process passes through. The language is simple and there are ample case illustrations (7 figures and 17 descriptive tables). The overall presentation and the typesetting are quite distinctive and user-friendly. This book will be an important aid to all mental health counsellors. Moreover, it will also provide enough food for thought on clinical skill development to psychologists, psychiatrists, psychiatric nurses and social workers.

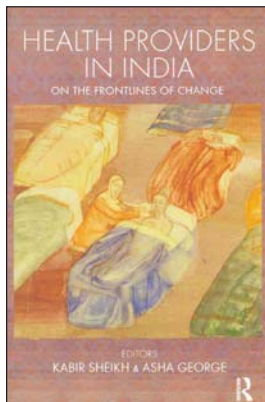
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Health Providers in India: On the frontlines of change. Kabir Sheikh, Asha George (eds). Routledge, New Delhi, 2010. 281 pp, ₹595. ISBN 978-0-415-57977-3.



Healthcare in India has undergone major changes in the past 2 decades, and perhaps no other field has changed as much as human resources have. Starting with the premise that there is limited scholarship on this issue, with much of it out of date, the authors set out to provide the reader with a more up-to-date description of health providers in India. They have marshalled an impressive array of experts who contribute chapters on their area of research/expertise.

The first three sections of the book cover the government health workers, doctors, and traditional and home care providers, and the last section deals with the gender-based connotations of work and

training. Each chapter examines a specific provider and issue, usually through the lens of an in-depth piece of qualitative research, giving the reader a rich experience of the topic at hand. The overall effect is that of a detailed look into a narrow focused topic, although some chapters do weave through a broader context in their background sections. Towards the end, there is an interesting complement to the academic text in the form of poems, written by a poet-clinician.

So who is the audience for this book? Many health providers and policy-makers from the subcontinent will not find much to surprise them here, but nonetheless will appreciate the consideration given to other colleagues among providers. For readers from the non-medical arena or from abroad, this book will be a valuable adjunct to understanding the myriad complexities of the Indian healthcare system. The obvious omissions (which the authors, to their credit, readily acknowledge in the introduction) are a discussion on nurses and their role, the substantial subterranean impact of caste, the transformation of medical education, and the rapidly burgeoning private sector.

From a broader perspective, what is missing is an integrative view of the field. Among the questions that could have been tackled are: How many providers do we have? Can we comment on the adequacy (quantity- and quality-wise) of this number? What are the trends in health provider production? Is the maldistribution becoming worse? What is/has been the impact of the brain drain? A summative chapter addressing these issues (or commenting on the lack of information on these), and tying the disparate threads together would have helped the reader put together the 'big picture' more easily.

Nonetheless, despite these criticisms, the authors by and large succeed in their aims. The book is eminently readable, and one need not proceed to read it in a linear fashion from cover to cover—each chapter can be savoured independently. As a sidelight, the chapters can also be viewed as excellent primers on how to conduct and present qualitative research. Given these considerations, the book is well worth its price.

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