

## 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.