

Book Review

Health Promotion and Education: Foundations for Changing Health Behavior

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The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has reemphasized the criticality of human behaviors and led to an enormous focus on health promotion and risk communication messaging; ‘COVID appropriate behavior’ is indeed a household term now. Dedicated or specialist health promotion professionals and scholars are few and far between and the author, Professor Madhumita Dobe, is both a pioneer and icon to generations of public health students and researchers. She has authored this book, filling up a much-needed void in this discipline. As she has acknowledged, this book is the culmination of a lifetime of teaching, research and practice at the All India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health, Kolkata and her rich

experience across the states of India and several countries.

The book comprises of ten chapters encompassing a wide canvass of concepts and techniques: health behavior; behavioral epidemiology; models of health promotion based on an understanding of health behavior theories; application of research methods and participatory techniques to health promotion and designing interventions; and elements of media and community mobilization components in health communication.

It covers a sizeable expanse of theory and applications through aptly designed layouts of each chapter. Each chapter begins with an outline of contents and the sections and sub-sections are appropriately organized. It is able to communicate the core concepts without overwhelming a young reader with an over-abundance of details. The carefully crafted blurbs provide insights into specific phenomena or cases, reinforcing the theoretical concepts and ideas. The author needs to be acknowledged for providing insightful graphics that add value to each section and the chapters as a whole. The author has successfully integrated components of multiple theories and models that need to interact and synergize in order to promote positive changes in attitudes and behaviors. Samples questions and rich bibliographies at the end of each chapter are important value additions.

The author acknowledges that this first edition is in no way complete or perfect. Doubtless, this book provides a comprehensive repository of health behavior and health promotion theories and methods. Rooted in an interdisciplinary tradition, the book is sure to inspire young public health students and scholars to take up this specialization in order to contribute to the ever-expanding world of public health challenges – acute communicable diseases and chronic non-communicable conditions.

As we know, health programs use a variety of communication channels and content to enable health messages to shape or influence not just mass media but

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also interpersonal, small groups or community-level campaigns. Specific examples and visual materials to exemplify these could have added greater value to the core methods detailed in the chapters. While chapter 2 focuses on concepts of social determinants and health inequity, the reader may have been better informed on communication and advocacy challenges of addressing structural factors and barriers, and social production of health/disease.

Coming from a health communicator par excellence, this book covers a wide range of topics on health promotion, health education and health behavior that will benefit both the beginner and the mid-career practitioner. There is no aspect of public health practice that is devoid of health communication or advocacy needs; this book shall cut across these diverse fields to empower and enrich both researchers and program managers. This first edition is sure to be a sell-out!