
Public Health

Local and global perspectives

Public Health: Local and global perspectives provides students with a comprehensive overview of Australian and international public health issues and contexts. It explores recent changes in the local public health field, as well as complex global public health issues, and engages with the political and cultural impacts these have on public health systems.

The book aims to deepen students' understanding of the determinants of health, historical and theoretical perspectives of public health, and current health research – particularly in the area of evidence-based practice. Through consideration of new perspectives, it introduces the latest public health discourses, and explores issues of health promotion and health inequalities that inform much of the understanding of public health today.

Drawing on more than 25 years' experience, Pranee Liamputtong leads a stellar author team to present this essential resource. Each chapter includes learning objectives, key words, tutorial exercises and further reading, as well as illustrative and informative case studies to aid students' understanding of key concepts.

Additional resources for students and instructors are available online at www.cambridge.edu.au/academic/publichealth.

Pranee Liamputtong is a medical anthropologist and Professor of Public Health at the School of Science and Health, Western Sydney University, Australia.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-55959-2 - Public Health: Local and Global Perspectives
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Pranee Liamputtong
EDITOR



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477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

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www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107559592

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First published 2016

Cover designed by Leigh Ashforth, watershed art + design

Typeset by Integra Software Services Pvt Ltd

Printed in Singapore by C.O.S. Printers Pte Ltd

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

A Cataloguing-in-Publication entry is available from the catalogue of the National Library of Australia at www.nla.gov.au

ISBN 978-1-107-55959-2 Paperback

Additional resources for this publication at www.cambridge.edu.au/academic/publichealth

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In memory of my late father:

Saeng Liamputtong

To my mother:

Yindee Liamputtong

To my two daughters:

Zoe Sanipreeya Rice and Emma Inturatana Rice

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Preface

What is public health? The answer to this can be different depending on who provides the answer. However, one thing that many public health writers tend to agree on is that public health is both a science and an art combined to protect and promote the health of public. Charles-Edward Amory Winslow, one of the leading figures in the history of public health, said this clearly in 1920: that public health effort could not be achieved solely through the application of pure science. He saw public health as both the science and the art that public health practitioners adopted for the prevention of disease and illness and the promotion of health in order to prolong the life of the public. The ‘science’ that Winslow referred to includes the research, biological, technical and medical knowledge that are utilised in public health practice. The ‘art’ is about the translation of scientific knowledge into practice in different settings, which can be varied according to the situations, circumstances and needs of the people. This argument is clearly seen in many chapters in this volume. This volume also makes clear that public health deals not only with health issues of the public but also with the social, cultural, economic and political issues that have an impact on the health of people. Chapters in the first and second parts have pointed to these issues. More concrete discussions and examples are illustrated in the last part of the volume where chapters discuss public health issues in different groups of people.

There have been many changes occurring in public health, including the impacts of environment, social, economic and political issues. For example, human rights and social justice have become a central concern in public health of people worldwide. Yet not many undergraduate texts in public health would discuss such important issues. Similarly, the health of some vulnerable groups such as children, adolescents, people with disabilities, refugees, migrants, indigenous people and rural people have been largely neglected in public health texts. Yet these population groups have unique health-related issues that public health practitioners need to understand so that sensitive health care can be provided to meet their real needs.

Readers of this book will learn not only about public health issues within the local setting but also about important issues occurring globally. The volume provides a comprehensive understanding about public health issues to readers. It also covers several important issues in public health. These include theoretical frameworks relevant to public health, key concepts in public health, the health of special groups of populations, research and policy. The book includes authors from across Australia. These authors are not only public health researchers but also teach in the public health course in different Australian universities. All authors are expert in their fields and their chapters contain information from their own empirical research as well as a review of literature from a local and global perspective.

The scope of the text is limited to the public health which is taught in both an undergraduate setting and used in professional contexts. Although the textbook is primarily designed for undergraduate students in the public health discipline, it will also be useful for undergraduate students in other disciplines, including nursing, medicine and health social sciences. Australian public health situations are the focus, but the volume also includes public health relevant to other countries and from a global context. This allows readers to have a comprehensive understanding about public health issues that affect people around the globe. It will expand their understanding about public issues beyond the Australian context and this will help to prepare them for the future endeavour. The text also includes research methodology and evidence-based practice in public health. This section will fulfil the need for undergraduate students to see the relevance of research and policy/practice in public health.

The volume comprises four parts and 18 chapters. Part 1 deals with historical and theoretical perspectives. Determinants of health are covered in Part 2. Public health and research are discussed in Part 3, and public health issues and special populations are situated in Part 4 of the volume.

In bringing this book to life, I owe my gratitude to many people. Like any other publication, this book could not have been possible without assistance from others. First, I wish to express my gratitude to Nina Sharpe of Cambridge University Press, who believed in the value of this book and contracted me to edit it. My thanks also go to Vilija Stephens, who worked closely with me on the book. Thank you for your great input in the production of this book. But, most importantly, I wish to express my sincere thanks to all the contributors in the volume who helped to make this book possible. Most of you worked so hard to meet our timetable and endured our endless emails. I hope that this journey has been a positive one for all of us.

This book is dedicated to my parents, who brought their children up amidst poverty in Thailand. They believed that only education would improve the lives of their children and hence worked hard to send us to school. I have made my career thus far because of their beliefs and the opportunity that they both have provided for me. I thank them profoundly. I also dedicate this book to my two daughters who have been part of my life and I thank them for understanding the ongoing busy life of their mother.

Pranee Liamputtong
Sydney, February 2016

Contributors

Editor

Pranee Liamputtong is a medical anthropologist and Professor of Public Health at the School of Science and Health, Western Sydney University, Australia. Pranee held a Personal Chair in Public Health at the School of Psychology and Public Health, College of Science, Health and Engineering, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia, until January 2016. She has also previously taught in the School of Sociology and Anthropology and worked as a public health research fellow at the Centre for the Study of Mothers' and Children's Health, La Trobe University. Pranee has a particular interest in issues related to cultural and social influences on childbearing, childrearing, and women's reproductive and sexual health. She works mainly with refugee and migrant women in Melbourne and with women in Asia (mainly in Thailand, Malaysia and Vietnam). She has published several books and a large number of papers in these areas.

Contributors

Frances Batchelor is the Director of Health Promotion at the National Ageing Research Institute and Manager of the Melbourne Ageing Research Collaboration. She is a physiotherapist with over 25 years of clinical experience in neurology and gerontology.

Christine Bigby is Professor of Social Work and Director of the multidisciplinary Living with Disability Research Centre at La Trobe University. She is a visiting Professor of Disability Research at Halmstad University in Sweden and the Tizard Centre at the University of Kent and a Fellow of the International Association for the Scientific Study of Intellectual Disability and the Australian College of Social Work. She is a national board member of *ASID – Research to Practice* and founding Editor of *Research and Practice in Intellectual Disability* (RAPIDD).

Irene Darmadi Blackberry is Senior Research Fellow at John Richards Initiative, La Trobe University and at Department of General Practice, University of Melbourne.

Lisa Bourke is a rural sociologist at the Rural Health Academic Centre, University of Melbourne.

Sharon Chirgwin is a lecturer at Menzies School of Health Research, responsible for the delivery of an undergraduate public health unit, Masters level Indigenous health units and coordination of professional doctorates.

Gemma Crawford is Post Graduate Health Promotion Coordinator and a lecturer in the School of Public Health and researcher with the Collaboration for Evidence, Research and Impact in Public Health at Curtin University. She is the current national and past Western Australian president of the Australian Health Promotion Association.

Alan Crouch is a population health academic at the Rural Health Academic Centre, University of Melbourne.

Simon Crouch is an Honorary Research Fellow with the Jack Brockhoff Child Health and Wellbeing Program at the University of Melbourne. He is a public health doctor and a member of the Australasian Faculty of Public Health Medicine Faculty Council.

Elizabeth Cyarto is the Healthy Ageing Stream Leader in the Health Promotion Division of the National Ageing Research Institute.

Heather D'Antoine is a Bard woman from the West Kimberley region of Western Australia. She qualified as a registered nurse in 1978 and as a midwife in 1987. She has worked in health research for the last 12 years and is currently the Associate Director for Aboriginal Programs at the Menzies School of Health Research in Darwin.

Elise Davis is a Senior Research Fellow within the Jack Brockhoff Child Health and Wellbeing Program at the University of Melbourne. Her research focuses on the mental health and quality of life of children and families. She has a particular interest in promoting the mental health and quality of life of children with a disability and their families.

Evelyne de Leeuw has qualifications in public health and political science and has attempted to straddle these areas throughout her career, shuttling between curriculum development and implementation in public health and theory-driven research in health policy development, notably in local government. In the latter area she has become a global evaluation expert in the WHO Healthy Cities programme. She serves as Editor-in-Chief of *Health Promotion International* and advisor to the World Health Organization in Copenhagen (European Healthy Cities) and Geneva (global Health in All Policies development).

Briony Dow is the Director of the Health Promotion Division of the National Ageing Research Institute where she manages a program of research on ageing, including healthy ageing. Briony is President of the Australian Association of Gerontology.

Lisa Gibbs is Deputy Director of the Jack Brockhoff Child Health and Wellbeing Program at the University of Melbourne.

Jonathan Hallett is a health promotion lecturer in the School of Public Health at Curtin University teaching public health practice, program evaluation and public health politics.

Toni Hannelly is a health, safety and environment lecturer in the School of Public Health at Curtin University. She teaches in the areas of environmental health management, environmental systems management and occupational hygiene and also coordinates the Environmental Health Australia accredited postgraduate environmental health course.

Jessica Heerde is a Post-Doctoral Research Associate in the Learning Sciences Institute Australia at the Australian Catholic University (ACU).

Sheryl Hemphill is Professor of Psychology in the Faculty of Health Sciences, at the ACU and a Program Director of a research program in ACU’s Learning Sciences Institute Australia.

Teresa Iacono is Professor of Rural and Regional Allied Health in the La Trobe Rural Health School, Bendigo. She is a member of the La Trobe University Living with Disability Research Centre, and leads the theme of ‘Enabling mainstream systems and services to be inclusive.’ With a background in speech pathology, Teresa is an experienced clinician and educator.

Jessica Lee is a lecturer in Health Promotion at Griffith University’s School of Medicine.

Patricia Lee is a senior lecturer in the School of Medicine at Griffith University.

Celia McMichael is a lecturer in the School of Social Sciences and Communications, La Trobe University.

Kirsty Morgan is a sessional teacher in public health and health promotion at Griffith University. She has held various health promotion positions related to the development and implementation of harm reduction and primary health care services for people who inject drugs.

John Oldroyd is a Research Fellow at Monash University. He teaches into the Bachelor of Health Sciences degree at Monash University and is currently Unit Coordinator of a unit ‘Foundations in Public Health’ which he teaches to first-year undergraduates.

Rebecca E. Olson is a lecturer in public health and course advisor for the postgraduate health sciences at the University of Western Sydney. She is an Associate Editor of the *Journal of Sociology* and a co-convenor of the Australian Sociological Association’s Sociology of Emotions and Affect Thematic Group.

David Pierce is mental health academic in the Rural Health Academic Centre at the University of Melbourne.

Christina Pollard is a dietitian and public health nutritionist who has worked for government for 30 years.

Bernadette Sebar is a senior lecturer in the School of Medicine at Griffith University.

Marguerite C. Sendall is an academic at the School of Public Health and Social Work, Queensland University of Technology, Australia.

Ann Taket is Chair in Health and Social Exclusion and Director of the Centre for Health through Action on Social Exclusion at Deakin University. She has over 30 years’ experience in public health related research.

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Acknowledgements

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Chapter 11: Extract from de Leeuw, E., McNess, A., Crisp, A. B., & Stagnitti, K. (2008). Theoretical reflections on the nexus between research, policy and practice. *Critical Public Health*, 18(1), 5–20 reprinted by permission of the publisher (Taylor & Francis Ltd, <http://www.tandfonline.com>).

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