

death occur. In all of these arenas, the relationships between the family and its members can be detracting, supporting, or inconsequential. It is no wonder that health care professionals have been both fascinated and confused by just how a patient's family affects their work. This handbook makes some progress in answering this question.

The book was conceived as a compendium of presentations made at an invitational conference held at Brigham Young University in 2002 and was enhanced by the addition of several papers targeting particularly critical areas. The authors of the various chapters represent expertise in health policy, economics, law, sociology and demography, family therapy, nursing, family medicine, health psychology, and psychiatry. Though primarily intended as a source and a review of the literature for scholars and investigators, with references as recent as 2003, it has much to offer clinicians. It should be of particular value to those who work in the areas of chronic medical illness and mental disorders, death and dying, and health care of minority groups and underserved populations. The chapters on the impact of parents infected with the human immunodeficiency virus on children, on family interventions to improve health, and on working with families of critically ill children are particularly good in this regard. The chapter on health care financing for the uninsured and underinsured should be required reading for all clinicians, so that they can understand the barriers their patients face. The health care financing decision trees in chapter 21, which take patients deeper into the morass of inadequate public financing with each fork in the tree, would be an amusing satire if they did not represent the truth.

In summary, this is one of the better works in a long line of scholarly compendiums of research and reviews on the relationship among families, health, and health care. The book moves the field along for investigators and policymakers and is of reasonable interest to clinicians. Unfortunately, many of the myths, mysteries, uncertainties, and fantasies about families are still unresolved, and the reader continues to be left with the sense that families are important but that, to paraphrase Tolstoy, "every family is important in its own way."

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HANDBOOK OF URBAN HEALTH: POPULATIONS, METHODS, AND PRACTICE

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THE STATED INTENTIONS OF THIS BOOK ARE to promote the systematic study of urban health and to serve as a bridge between urban health research and public health practice. For the most part, the book succeeds in reaching both aims. With its reasonably complete summaries of current knowledge in the area, it is a useful teaching guide and a well-referenced resource for students, practitioners, and academicians. It covers a remarkably broad range of topics with brief, mostly well-written overviews by academicians and practitioners from across the United States, and it provides an extensive list of references and resources for each topic for readers who want or need more detail.

The book has three sections. The first focuses on the health of specific urban populations, the second on methods central to the study of urban health, and the third on public health strategies for prevention and intervention in urban communities. All are written with the recognition of the unique physical, social, economic, and political factors influencing health in urban environments and with the acknowledgment of the growing importance of understanding and addressing these factors, given the dramatic acceleration of urbanization worldwide. In the last chapter of each section, the editors identify and discuss a set of common elements that tie the chapters together. These final chapters are useful because of the wide range of topics covered and the various and sometimes divergent perspectives of the authors, who represent many disciplines.

The most interesting aspect of the first section is the similarities that exist among an incredibly diverse set of populations. Although differences among various populations need to be considered by public health policy and practice, it is at least as important to consider and understand the urban population as a whole. Ultimately, properly informed public health policy and practice require a solid understanding of both the unique qualities of individual populations and the dynamics of the entire urban population as a composite of these interrelated groups.

The second section consists of a diverse set of

