

Book Review

Health Promotion in Disease Outbreaks and Health Emergencies. By Glenn Laverack. CRC Press: Boca Raton, FL, USA, 2017; 188 pp.; ISBN: 978-1-138-09317-1

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Received: 16 November 2017; Accepted: 16 November 2017; Published: 20 November 2017

Throughout our evolutionary history, humans have lived—and died—with the threat of infectious diseases and catastrophic emergencies. In the contemporary era of high technology and increased scientific knowledge, the opportunity for preparedness and effective responses to disease outbreaks and health emergencies has never been better. However, the question becomes how to best translate knowledge into the realization of prevention, effective responses and post-event care. In his new book, health promotion expert Glenn Laverack argues that failure to engage with and include the larger community in planning and response—instead favoring a dominant, top-down, response driven by select authorities—is a perilous venture.

Dr. Laverack's *Health Promotion in Disease Outbreaks and Health Emergencies* (CRC Press, 2017; 188 pages; ISBN-13 978-1-138-09317-1) adds to his portfolio of well-written books in the sphere of public health, and health promotion in particular. In a career spanning more than 25 years—including positions within universities and the World Health Organization—Dr. Laverack is an expert who understands how top-down, fear-based approaches and interventions can undermine the most well-intended responses to outbreaks and major health emergencies. In this new CRC title, he converts that understanding into reader-friendly prose; the content is structured well so that the reader is provided with essential background information early on—from the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion to professional competencies for health promotion, the reader is provided with the contextual information to move forward through the text.

The book is systematic in its approach as it highlights the importance of health promotion today and into the future. It includes ten chapters divided into three main parts. Part I provides the necessary overviews and contextual information pertaining to health promotion and the increasing involvement of many institutional actors in planning and responding to health emergencies. Part II is more specific and examines the challenges of vector-borne and person-to-person disease outbreaks, as well as the opportunities for health promotion to provide effective solutions. Part III covers specialist areas of work in health promotion.

The writing style avoids technical jargon and terminology is well-defined; liberal use of call-out boxes and Key Point summaries enhances the educational value of the book and reinforces its key messages. These buffer the lack of a wrap up, or concluding chapter in the text. There are also plenty of international examples of the ways in which disease outbreaks have been handled in the past, including the hard lessons of what happens when bottom-up (community involvement) is not part of the health promotion programme. Importantly, the book illustrates how community engagement can be effectively incorporated into the health promotion strategies at all stages of the planning and interventions directed at health emergencies, including post-event care.

The content covers timely topics, including the ways in which rumors can spread concerning infectious disease and effective vaccination programs. As Dr. Laverack highlights, undoing rumors, myths and misconceptions is not an easy task. It can be hampered by well-intended, authoritarian, fear-based messaging. The field of health promotion is an evidence-based approach and the best practice, but ultimately it is about communication. With multiple examples cited, the book provides the pathways to communication and empowerment so that experts and authorities can work top-down with empowered communities that can also provide knowledge and leadership for the mutual benefit of all.

Disease outbreaks and sudden, large-scale health emergencies are part of the human condition. This book is essential reading for any person or organization dedicated to the promotion of human health. For readers interested in global health, it provides a deep understanding of the interconnectivity of life and the sectors (transport, agriculture, housing, education etc.) of society's systems. Dr. Laverack's pedagogical skills allow the reader to appreciate and trust that there is a way forward.



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