

**Krug GE, Dahlberg LL, Mercy AJ, Zwi A, Lozano R, editors. World Report on Violence and Health. Geneva: WHO publications, 2002; 346 pages [in English, Spanish, French, Arabic, Russian, and Chinese]; ISBN 92-4-1545615; price: CHF 30.00; in developing countries CHF 15.00.**

**Field of medicine:** Public health.

**Audience:** Public and other health professionals, post-graduate students in the field of public health, policy-makers, researchers, practitioners, military and police students, social workers, advocates, non-governmental organizations, volunteers involved in violence prevention.

**Purpose:** The purpose of the First World Report on violence and health is to raise awareness about the problem of violence globally and emphasize the preventability of violence and a crucial role that public health has to play in addressing its causes and consequences. The aim is to challenge the secrecy, taboos, and feelings of inevitability of the violence in the life, encourage debate that will increase our understanding of this complex phenomenon, stimulate people to work together in partnerships of all kinds, and develop effective responses to violent behavior at all levels.

**Content:** The book is divided in nine chapters: 1) Violence – a global public health problem; 2) Youth violence; 3) Child abuse and neglect by parents and other caregivers; 4) Violence by intimate partners; 5) Abuse of the elderly; 6) Sexual violence; 7) Self-directed violence; 8) Collective violence; and 9) The way forward: recommendations for action. The chapters have a similar structure. Each begins with a brief discussion of definitions for the specific type of violence covered in the chapter, followed by a summary of current knowledge about the extent of the problem in different regions of the world. Where possible, data and research findings in individual countries are presented. The chapters describe the causes and consequences of violence, provide summaries of the interventions and policy responses and make recommendations for future research and action. Tables, figures, and boxes are included. The report ends with a summary of the document.

The consequences of violent behavior could not be ignored in the effort to improve the nation's health. An estimated 1.6 million people lost their lives to violence in 2000 – about half were suicides, a third were homicides, and a fifth were casualties of armed conflict. The majority of violence is non-fatal and results

in injuries, mental health and reproductive health problems, sexually transmitted diseases, and other health disorders. Health effects can last years and may include permanent physical or mental disability. Violence exacts substantial social and economic costs. At its meeting in Geneva in 1996, the World Health Assembly adopted a resolution declaring violence a leading public health problem worldwide. As an extremely diffuse and complex phenomenon, violence has been very difficult to define. It is one of the reasons why it has largely been ignored as a public health issue. An effort must be made to reach consensus and set universal standards of behavior through the elaboration of human rights to protect human life and dignity. The World Health Organization defines violence as follows: *The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group of community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.* There are few typologies of violence, and the one used in this Report divides violence into three broad categories: self-directed violence, interpersonal violence, and collective violence. No single factor explains why one person behaves in a violent manner, whereas other does not. Violence is a complex problem rooted in the interaction of many factors – biological, social, cultural, economical, and political. To solve the problem of violence, we need a multisectoral and collaborative approach. Violence prevention programs and policies can target individuals, relationships, communities, and whole societies. Greater priority should be given to primary prevention of violence and evaluation should be an integral part of all activities.

**Highlights:** Violence has often been seen as an inevitable part of the human condition – a fact of life to respond to rather than prevent. However, it can be prevented, its impact can be reduced, and factors that contribute to violent responses can be changed. As public health focuses on the health of communities and populations as a whole, and takes an interdisciplinary and science-based approach to any problem, it could address such a complex problem as violence in the most appropriate way. This report makes rec-

ommendations for action at the local, national and international level and stress the importance of involving all sectors of society in the prevention efforts.

**Limitations:** It is very difficult to assess the extent of violence and its effects on the individuals, families, and communities since currently available data show only the tip of the iceberg of that problem.

**Related readings:** War and Public Health (Levy SB, Sidel WV, editors, Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press in Cooperation with the American Public Health Association, 2000) deals separately with the topics integrated in this report. It represents the first comprehensive examination of the relationship between war and public health.

Aida Mujkić

**Yassi A, Kjellstrom T, de Kok T, Guidotti TL. Basic Environmental Health. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 2001. 441 pages; ISBN 0-19-513558-X; price: GBP 35.00**

**Field of medicine:** Environmental health.

**Format:** Hardcover book.

**Audience:** Medical students, postgraduates in public health, environmental science, and management, and others who need introduction to environmental health, including students interested in environmental law, geography, urban planning, and social work.

**Purpose:** The aim is to educate the reader about basic relationships between environmental factors and human health, and to explain how larger socioeconomic issues affect the environment and health, and what types of interrelationships can be found in an ecosystem framework. Also, environmental health is interpreted within a historical context with respect to changes in technology, demography, economy, and social organization. This book can be used as a practical reference book in planning and evaluating environmental health studies, projects, and actions.

**Content:** The book is divided into three sections and twelve chapters, each covering defined objectives. The first section is an introduction to the concepts and methods applied in environmental health. Chapter one brings an overview of the macro-level influences on environmental health, explaining principles of human interaction with the environment, the basic requirements for healthy environment, and methods to measure environmental quality. Historical perspective and patterns of illnesses across the different regions in the world are given. The first chapter also describes links between environmental and occupational health and how workplace could serve as a sentinel for environmental hazards. Importance of both consistency in standard setting and incentives for prevention is emphasized. This book approaches the problems and issues in environmental health from the demographic, poverty, and consumer point of view and offers possible solutions. Chapter two describes the nature of environmental health hazards, incorporating toxicology, microbiology, health phys-

ics, injury analysis, and psychosocial concepts. Chapters three and four lay out basic approaches to risk assessment and risk management, and discuss epidemiological methods. Risk assessment framework includes hazard identification, dose response assessment, exposure assessment, and risk characterization, whereas risk management includes risk evaluation, perception and communication, control of exposure, and risk monitoring. All issues are well defined and corroborated with many real life examples and steps how to calculate the risk. Both chapters offer substantial information and appropriate analytical methods, which can be used in both students and scientists' projects. Chapter four discusses another very important issue: application of principles of economic evaluation of environmental health interventions – a topic often bypassed in all undergraduate studies except economy. Cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit analysis of intervention is described and explained on the actual case study from the practice of health care professionals.

The second section organizes discussion by the route of exposure. Chapter five addresses air quality, chapter six water and sanitation, and chapter seven food and agricultural issues. All the chapters describe major pollution sources and how quality criteria are developed, and discuss various approaches to prevention and solution of the problems associated with implementation strategies.

The third section is dealing with problems of sustainable development. Chapter eight describes the nature and requirements of human settlements and summarizes health hazards characteristic of the urban environment. Chapters nine and ten are dealing with health and energy use, industrial pollution, and chemical safety. The two chapters send uncertain message how modern life could be sustainable on less energy consumption and less industrial pollution, and explain what is ultimate adaptation capacity of humans and carrying capacity of the Earth. Finally, ap-

proaches to the prevention are described, as well as the approach to the development of the occupational exposure standards. Chapters eleven and twelve tie the content of the book together, focusing on global health concerns, ethical issues, and concrete application of the presented material.

All chapters contain real life examples, definitions, and explanations. Tables and graphs are clear and easy to understand. Since study questions are given at the end of each chapter, the book may be used as a textbook.

**Highlights:** Environmental health and environmental science have been among the key concerns at the end of the 20th century and will continue to be such in the new millennium. Concerns for environmental protection and public health worldwide have led to extensive legislation. The investigation and modeling of environmental systems, together with the implementation of laws and regulations, has increased the demand for a large number of environmental measurements, knowledge to judge quality and limitations of environmental data obtained, and ethical principles on when and how to take action. This book addresses all these problems and offers modern view of the global health concerns, such as transboundary pollution, modern conventional warfare, and technological disasters. All these issues are described very realistically in regard to existing political and economical situation in the world. Despite those not always optimistic predictions, book offers a thorough explanation of the role of environmental health professionals, their tasks and professional obligations, and on what governmental and nongovernmental levels they can act. Also, ethical principles are described by which an action on environmental

health should be guided. Practical step-by-step plan is presented ("From Knowledge to Action"), teaching the student how to prepare extensive and thorough environmental research and action afterwards. This book can always serve as reference literature to students as well as experts in their everyday work.

**Limitations:** Environmental health is a complex multidisciplinary field and there is a little room for ready-made solutions proposed or given solely by environmental scientists. It takes mobilization of all the parts of the society and strong intersectoral collaboration to achieve some positive changes in environmental management. It is hard to imagine a book, especially a textbook that would be able to overcome these limitations and offer suggestions for the integral public health answers. In present times environmental medicine is very often politically and economically tinted and determined.

**Related reading:** Books that are dealing with the environmental factors in more detail are *Environmental Epidemiology – Effects of Environmental Chemicals on Human Health*, edited by W.M. Draper (Oxford University Press; 2000), and *Environmental Analytical Chemistry*, edited by F.W. Fifield and P.J. Haines (Blackwell Science; 2001). Both books offer chapters on specific methodology used in environmental studies and interpretation of such data. For postgraduate students and for all professionals public health, *Oxford Textbook of Public Health* (Deteles R, McEwen J, Beaglehole R, Tanaka H, editors. Oxford University Press; 2001) is an excellent reference, with fourth section in the second volume dedicated to environmental and occupational sciences.

Ksenija Vitale

**Branch AD, Seeff LB, editors. Hepatitis C: State of the Art at the Millennium. New York: Thieme; 2000. 246 pages; ISBN 0-86577-998-8; price: US\$ 99.00**

**Field:** Internal medicine (gastroenterology, hepatology) and infectious diseases.

**Format:** Hardcover.

**Audience:** Physicians, general practitioners as well as specialists in the field of internal diseases/gastroenterology/hepatology or infectious diseases.

**Purpose:** To provide the latest and most up-to-date information and analyses of both basic scientific and clinical aspects of the hepatitis C pathogen.

**Content:** The book consists of sixteen reviews/chapters written by a large group of distinguished scientists and physicians involved in hepatitis C re-

search. The Introduction gives detailed information on the publisher's publication history on this topic, and emphasizes the importance of not only conveying what is known, but also focusing attention to many things that are not. After a short Foreword by the editors follows chapter one focused on the epidemiology of hepatitis C, its geographic differences, transmission patterns, prevention strategies, and known risk factors for infection with hepatitis C virus (HCV). Chapter two covers the long-term outcome perspectives of HCV infection. The abridged chapter two could boil down to the fact that 64% of all HCV infections have a favorable outcome, which is a

higher rate than previously considered. Chapter three reviews the modes of transmission, treatment, and possible outcomes of HCV in the pediatric population, the specificities of the immune reaction of children to HCV, and the limitations of interferon therapy. Chapter four, which discusses the detection, staging, and significance of fibrosis in patients with chronic hepatitis C, is followed by chapter five about the genome of the HCV and its RNA codes, as well as the relationship between viral replication and interferon production. Chapter six summarizes the role of HCV nonstructural proteins with respect to viral replication and host immune response, and elucidates the implications of these proteins as targets for the development of novel vaccines and antiviral agents. Chapter seven describes the features of HCV genomic RNA replication, the relationship between viral replication and histological features of hepatitis C, problems of *in situ* detection, and the choice of markers associated with replication of HCV. Chapters eight through ten deal with clinical and immunological significance of HCV genotypes, mechanisms behind the genetic variability and the HCV persistence, as well as the B-cell lymphoproliferation in HCV infections. Diagnostic tests for hepatitis C, as well as their sensitivity and specificity, are described in chapter eleven. Chapter twelve brings mathematical models in HCV infections and clarifies how the kinetics of viral decline can help mold therapy and effects of Interferon treat-

ment on viral load. Chapter thirteen covers indications, specificities, and considerations of antiviral therapy in patients with chronic hepatitis C. Hepatitis C is the most common cause of end-stage liver disease leading to liver transplant. Chapter fourteen thus makes an interesting reading since it covers post-transplant hepatitis C, its recurrence rate, severity of the disease, risk factors, and treatment. Chapter fifteen gives a glimpse of what is to come, the latest news and views on vaccine development for hepatitis C. Finally, chapter sixteen is a case report of a patient with HCV infection and a liver tumor, giving support to the suggested role of HCV in the development of intrahepatic cholangiocarcinoma. The book ends with an Afterword about the challenges of HCV therapy in the decades ahead.

**Highlights:** A plethora of very useful and helpful protocols, detailing most aspects of the topics covered.

**Limitations:** The only limitations are the constant and incessant advances in the approaches to any medical topic.

**Related reading:** Every chapter ends with a very detailed list of references, making it easy to find all the information on the background of the covered topics.

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