

Book Review

**Epidemiology:
A Research Manual for
South Africa. 2nd Edition**
Edited by Gina Joubert
and Rodney Ehrlich



To the Editor: This is a concise yet comprehensive book and the editors need to be congratulated in fusing several different contributions into a coherent whole.

This text is invaluable to all concerned with epidemiology, public health, evidence based practice and research in general. Each chapter is well researched by respected specialists and draws on diverse examples of case studies, scenarios and tables which are particularly relevant to the South African context. This, I believe makes it a very useful reference and an excellent educational resource for undergraduate and post-graduate students in the field of epidemiology and public health, as well as for any healthcare professional actively involved in research, and in need to improving their critical appraisal skills of research evidence.

This thoroughly updated and extensively revised second edition has no glaring weaknesses and is an indispensable guide which features new sections on a broad range of topics, including, social epidemiology and epidemiology applied to specific areas of disease surveillance, HIV/Aids, infectious disease, psychiatry as well as environmental and occupational epidemiology. Its easy to use outline format and bold headings ensure rapid access to specific information. Even the appendices on standardization, the random number table, report writing and particularly the calculation of sample size are very useful for the beginner. A specific chapter on bridging the gap between evidence and practice which would address the difficult issue of application and

implementation of good quality research evidence on effectiveness into practice, would be very useful in future editions.

The book should equip you with the skills and augment your existing skills required in conducting research, critical appraisal and the use of research in evidence based decision making - a concept which is becoming more and more applicable to public health. Chapters on research ethics, conducting a literature review, planning research, data presentation, analysis, interpretation, introduction to qualitative research and report writing (appendix) are particularly valuable to the novice researcher involved in surveys and other forms of descriptive research. However more advanced chapters such as economic evaluation ensures that there is enough for the teacher to sharpen the saw.

Although the editors have aimed for a "homegrown product" and this book is clearly written for the South African context, it contains central concepts and common factors which influence healthcare and healthcare delivery in many countries irrespective of their geographical latitude or stage of development and this could therefore be of use to readers in the broader African context and elsewhere.

This is an excellent text - a splendid book which meets a major need in epidemiology and public health and is particularly useful for doers and users of research. It will certainly contribute to developing epidemiology as an academic discipline and assist in improving public health in South Africa.

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Errata

The Publisher wishes to apologise for the following mistakes that have occurred in the October and December issues. Corrected replacement pages have been sent to the printers but were unfortunately not successfully replaced.

The replacement pages contained the following:

October:

- The updAIDS column was preceded by an editorial by Prof Helmut Reuter. This was not clearly indicated in the printed copy. The replaced page is now available online at www.safpj.co.za.
SA Fam Pract 2007;49(9): 35

December:

- Index: The Open Forum article by Draper CE was swapped with the original research article by Moodley LM and Rambritch V.
SA Fam Pract 2007;49(10): 1

We thank Dr Don O'Mahony from Port St Johns for also pointing out that:

- The synopsis in the InfoPOEMs, on Home Glucose Monitoring Ineffective, refers to another topic. We have repeated that infoPOEM in this issue as we do not have publishing rights to make a correction online.
SA Fam Pract 2008;50(1): 65