

Book and Media Review

Blake, D. P., Green, L. W., & Rootman, I. (Eds.). (1999). *Settings for Health Promotion: Linking Theory and Practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. ISBN: 0-8039-74183. Hardcover. 381 pages. \$59.95.

In its report *Improving Health in the Community*, The Institute of Medicine (1997) began by recognizing that in communities health is a product of many factors, and many segments of the community can contribute to and share responsibility for its protection and improvement. The text *Settings for Health Promotion* contains proposals for how to accomplish the task of shared responsibility in community health through a settings approach to health promotion.

The nine chapters, each by internationally known authors from the United States, Canada, Europe, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand, describe the state of the art in the theory and practice of health promotion. Each explores a different context setting for health promotion with analysis of programs for their relevance and efficiency.

This comprehensive text serves as a technical guide to planning, implementing, and evaluating settings-based health promotion. As Lawrence W. Green, Blake Poland, and Irving Rootman point out in their opening chapter, authors were asked to identify innovations in theory and

practice in the application of health promotion to the category of settings under consideration, as well as to provide a historical perspective on these developments. Chapter authors have done a reasonable job accomplishing these aims.

Each chapter describes a different setting:

1. Home and family
2. School
3. Workplace
4. Health care institutions
5. Clinical practice
6. The community
7. The state

In addition to these chapters, there is an introductory chapter by the editors, a foreword, and a reflections chapter by the editors. The book includes an index and biographical information about each editor and chapter author.

A unique feature of the book is a commentary section that follows each chapter. The editors sent each settings chapter to other leading thinkers in the field who were asked to write a commentary response. Each chapter, thus, is followed by two commentary pieces written in response to the primary chapter. This element works well because

The Reviewer

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there are many new issues raised by these commentaries and plenty of fodder for controversy over differences of opinion. For example, the chapter on home and family as a setting, authored by Hassan Soubhi and Louise Potvin, was followed by commentaries by Lawrence Fisher and Ilze Kalnins. Kalnins' commentary focused on the importance of the home as a safety environment and an information environment and argues that attention must also be paid to the physical environment of the home and resources within it to prevent injuries. But her examples of the superiority of passive strategies (structural changes) over active strategies (behavioral strategies) lack a thorough appreciation for the limits of passive approaches. One recent example is the case of automatic protection provided by passenger-side

The Editor

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airbags. Once considered a panacea for injury prevention to automotive passengers, the recent and unexpected deaths to children and small-stature adults from airbags resulted in a growing recognition of the need to take an active approach to this passive protection by placing children in the back seat. As much as we would like to hope otherwise, most injuries cannot be resolved by introducing a vaccine-like technology, as the technology must be proven safe, adopted by people, and used properly in order to be effective. The commentary did not point out that although it is tempting to factor out human behavior and individual choice in preventing injury in the home, it is rarely achievable.

The audience for the book is wide and varied. The book is intended as a resource for professionals engaged

in the design, implementation, and evaluation of health promotion interventions in particular settings. It is also useful to students new to health promotion and to academic scholars in the health sciences, nursing, and occupational health. Because the book is laced with numerous case studies and real-life examples to make the concepts more tangible and realistic, it should be of interest to an international audience.

One important feature of the book that the editors note is the recognition of the tension between legislative and regulatory efforts to promote change and grassroots empowerment strategies that involve community participation. They recognize that these approaches are not necessarily mutually exclusive and can contribute to one another in important ways but

may play different roles in facilitating change in different settings.

In conclusion, the book goes a long way in offering readers a broad perspective of the settings in which health promotion takes place and of the problems, success potential, and opportunities to improve the delivery of health promotion in various settings. As the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's David McQueen notes in his foreword, "settings reveal all the complexity with which health promotion must contend."

REFERENCE

Institute of Medicine. (1997). *Improving health in the community*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

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**PLS. PROVIDE 4 KEYWORDS
FOR INDEXING**