

ETHNIC DISEASES SOURCEBOOK

Edited by J. B. Shannon. Detroit, MI: Omnigraphics Publishers, ©2001. ISBN # 0-7808-0336-1; 664 pp. \$78.

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Introduction

This volume is one of 76 current titles available in the "Health Reference Series" produced by Omnigraphics publishers. Virtually every major type of biomedical disease category and treatment modality are covered in the series launched in 1992.

Contents

The Ethnic Disease Sourcebook focuses on racial and ethnic variations in disease incidence, prevalence, and symptomatology. The data are mainly derived from recent publications issued by 23 US government agencies and private organizations, including: the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); the US Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS); the National Institutes of Health (NIH); the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH); and the US Public Health Service (USPHS).

Extensive references to articles in scientific journals are also provided. For example, the chapter entitled, "Asian-American Women," cites 179 published articles and 58 citations follow the chapter on genetic testing. The book's findings are divided into 6 sections, the first of which outlines general health indicators and statistics in different racial and ethnic groups. Part II, "Diseases of Ethnicity," describes genetic disorders and features separate short chapters on sickle-cell anemia, Tay-Sachs disease, thalassemia, Niemann-Pick Disease, Familial Mediterranean Fever, and five others.

Part III, "Genetic Testing," features inherited disease diagnosis and genetic counseling, in-

cluding a novel chapter entitled "Genetic Information and the Workplace." Part IV covers "Chronic Diseases," which involve the combined interactions of genetic predisposition and substantial environmental input: cardiovascular disorders, cancer, diabetes, asthma, hepatitis, and AIDS. Topics include differential susceptibility, demography and distribution patterns, and symptom variations. Part V summarizes recent research on mental health/illness in different ethnic groups, as well as possible correlations between cultural diversity and help-seeking behavior.

In Part VI, "Ethnic Women's Health," individual chapters are devoted to African-American, Asian-American, Hispanic-American, and Native-American populations. Epidemiological patterns of drug use, pregnancy outcomes, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), pregnancy outcomes, aging trends, life expectancy, and leading causes of death are noted.

The final two sections are concerned with strategies for health assessment and improvement. Up-to-date information is presented on health insurance, "cultural competency" in health care, nutrient content of ethnic foods, and an extensive chapter (118 pages) on culturally specific health education resources and materials, which lists: names, addresses, telephone numbers, and Internet websites of public and private foundations that offer health services and information for a variety of populations.

Clearly intended as a reference work rather than a classroom text, this volume would be equally useful for clinicians and

field researchers. The ample supply of baseline data contained in this book provides a solid framework for the greater understanding, prediction, and prevention of diseases in different ethnic populations. The many listings of relevant agencies and foundations along with current contact information alone make this a true sourcebook in the field.

There are some minor but distracting organizational problems. Some of the chapters, such as "Health Status of Older Minority Women" and "Health Insurance and Access to Health Care," lack reference citations. Several topics are scattered repetitively throughout several different chapters, including aging, nutrition, genetic screening, etc. Besides the discussion of AIDS, the important subject of ethnic and racial variations in infectious disease susceptibility and treatment is not addressed. The brief (12 pages) glossary, inexplicably placed prior to the final three chapters, should either be expanded or eliminated in a future edition. The term, acculturation, generally defined by anthropologists as culture change through intercultural contact, is defined by the author as: "The social distance separating members of an ethnic or racial group from the wider society in areas of beliefs and values and primary work relations." (p. 461). The author also incorrectly states that "Crossing Over" is "also known as recombination." (p. 463).

This comprehensive compendium is recommended as a worthwhile starting point for educators and researchers interested in the many genetic and environmental factors that influence the incidence and distri-

bution of human diseases. It would be a valuable addition to the health and medicine section of any library.