

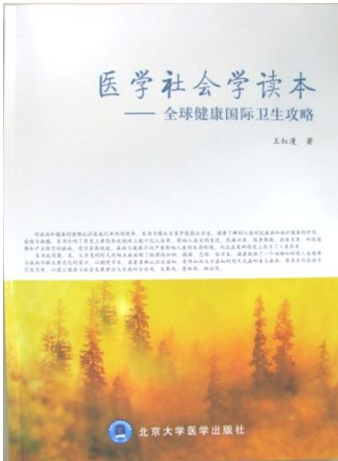
Take a Broad View on Global Health

Review of *Reader of Medical Sociology—Global Health Walkthrough*

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Reader of Medical Sociology—Global Health Walkthrough was published by Peking University Medical Press in 2010. The author, Prof. Wang, works in Center for Health and Social Development of Peking University mainly researching on national health care mode and security system, sociology and science of making decisions, health diplomacy, theory and practice of health and social development, framework for population and development strategy.

The author gets rid of traditional ways of writing a medical sociology book. After reading WHO reports, Professor Wang introduces 27 diseases that have killed billions of people and have influenced the development of civilization, war, regime, technology and industry. This book illustrates paces, achievements and regrets of fighting against these diseases.

These handpicked diseases are exactly what we students most interested in and anxious to know. After reading the book, medical students are able to get a deeper understanding of diseases while non-medical students, whose hankering for knowledge has been aroused, can keep their fingers on the pulse of disease trends.

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Here are the voices given by four students from the perspectives of clinic, nursing, humanities, and public health:

Xiaorui Wang

Department of Diagnostic Imaging, First Hospital, Peking University Health Science Center

“As a student of medical imaging, I used to simply consider diseases by clinical manifestation and lab data. However, it is not enough for understanding diseases well in practice. My opinion did not change until I came across the book, which shed lights on me to understand the diseases concerned with social development from the perspective of sociology. It is my fortune to read the book, *reader of Medical Sociology –Global health Walkthrough*, before I graduate.

With the development of technology, the understanding of diseases is becoming increasingly broader and deeper than before. Meanwhile, anxiety and doubt of the living environment is arising. People have fallen into the panic of modern diseases, such as AIDS and Legionaries’ disease, after they got away from the shadow of Black Death in medieval. How many diseases are threatening us on earth? Facing the increasing number of diseases, should we only defense blindly? With these questions, I read the book. Diseases mentioned in the book, such as Yaws, Yellow Fever and Guinea Worm disease extend my mind to a worldwide range. The discovery of AIDS makes me know more about the obstacles and required qualities in science research. Also the deficits of current health system and vulnerable health habits are realized. Human being is confronting “triple whammy of diseases” --the lingering infectious diseases, the unstoppable chronic non-communicable diseases, and the potentially dangerous mental diseases.

Though clinicians are under pressures due to excessive work, it is necessary for them to have a global vision on diseases. They are usually not interested in or concerned about public health. Nevertheless, since all objects are related to each other, it is not wise to pay all one’s attention to one area only. Clinicians need to get the latest knowledge of diseases and be ready to face all kinds of situations that are not mentioned in textbooks. The health of human is influenced by complicated factors, both physical and psychological. It is essential for clinicians to understand these factors in order to diagnose entirely and precisely.

As a guide of medical sociology, this book is undoubtedly successful. It provides a comprehensive introduction of public health. It not only has experimental study of diseases, clinical treatment, epidemiological analysis, but also focuses on the origin and development of diseases, and analyzes the prevalence of diseases from global view.”

Yanjing Chen

School of Nursing, Peking University Health Science Center

To reacquaint health and diseases is our common mission. As a nursing school student, I used to only consider how to take good care of the sick and help them to get over illness, pain and

sorrow. This book makes me feel that it is far from enough. What is the social impact of diseases? How do we combat them on a global scale? ... In this book, Professor Wang explains the answers from an interdisciplinary perspective, and refines those diseases which greatly influenced human society.

Not just an academic monograph, but also a reference for teaching on medical sociology, this book gives us an idea of extensive health conception. Being popular and easy to understand, it explains the profound in simple terms, provides undergraduates with additional knowledge as extracurricular reading, and also helps postgraduates to build a solid foundation for further study.

Shuyang Yu

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In 1948, WHO defined that “Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” It is very important to consider health problems from sociological perspective: on one hand, social factors and environmental factors can cause diseases and disability; on the other hand, they can protect and promote health. Taking diabetes, hypertension, tumor, AIDS and Legionnaires’ disease as examples, these modern civil diseases are mostly caused by unhealthy ways of life.

In recent years, the number of books that are concerned with medical sociology has increased in China. It is glad to see this field is getting more and more attention of health workers. But most of these books only theoretically discuss roles, relationships and actions in medicine, such as patients’ role, nurses’ role, doctor-patient relationships, and medical securities that are provided by governments. They can’t deeply impress their readers. Especially, in some books, the translations are difficult to understand. The readers can’t be stimulated to explore more things about medical sociology.

Compared to those medical sociology books, there are some highlights of Professor Wang’s book:

1. It has combined historical and global perspective together.

The author shows the discovery, prevalence and control of diseases in a perspective of developing. Moreover, with the development of globalization, modern vehicles, such as ships and planes, provide convenience not only to human, but also to the spread of diseases. So it’s significant for us to prevent and control diseases by researching their trends from a global perspective.

2. It enlightens readers by combining theories with practice.

At the end of each chapter, the author raises several questions which can lead readers to ponder in a deeper level and broaden their scope of knowledge.

3. The main features of each disease are concise and clear.

The language of this book is refined without unnecessary details. Especially, just by the directory, in which there is a brief introduction of each disease, the readers can understand the characteristics of them. Furthermore, the author classifies all these diseases according to their social features. It makes the readers view these diseases in a social perspective directly. In addition, the author intimately marks several tips in every page which can catch the readers' attention and let them read and remember conveniently.

4. It clarifies the developing trends of diseases by using graphs, tables and words together.

This is the light spot of the book. Besides the narration of each disease, it outfits various graphs and tables to show their developing trends and distributions intuitively.

After reading this book and think over the questions in the book deeply, I realize that diseases play an important role in human history. We are far away from the victory of conquest diseases, although we eliminated smallpox in 1979. There are too many disasters caused by developed industry, unhealthy way of life, low moral standards and heavy society pressures. To conquer all diseases only by biotechnology is infeasible. In history, the definitions of medicine were different in each period. It is hard to give medicine an austere definition as math or physics. But at least we have realized that if we want to develop medicine and become healthier, the traditional biomedical model must be abandoned. Health workers should consider medical problems from sociology perspective and acquire knowledge of different subjects.

Although WHO has made significant contributions to the development of global health, it also requires cooperation of all countries to solve global health problems. Especially, when facing the problems of the countries those are in poor health conditions, the developed countries shouldn't detach themselves away. Due to the aim of health service, which is to be healthy and to develop together, health work shouldn't be full of competitions.

In a word, since it has great reference value for disease diagnosis and making health policy, this book is a masterpiece for carrying out health work under the background of health globalization.

Minyi Zhang

Institute of Medical Humanities, Peking University Health Science Center

It is a work of great scholarship that dissects disease trends in a global context.

Based on vivid, interesting stories, illustrated with a mixture of pictures and graphs, the book presents the entire process from the ignorance to the understanding of what a disease is as readers get a handle on the development of a disease in a relaxed and casual manner. Combining rationality with sensibility, it explores the molecular level, clinical manifestation, and treatment of some diseases; with an equal emphasis on both macroscopic and microscopic perspective, staying at the forefront of medical science, it provides, from the perspective of the study of public health, a detailed explanation of disease distribution by person, space, and time, and the overview of global epidemic trends as well as the characteristics of China's.

Incorporating sociology into medicine, the book draws a vivid picture of the impact and challenges of diseases on society and humanity. A spectrum of perspectives opens our eyes wider to an increasing knowledge of diseases. And in conclusion from the perspective of global public health, it popularizes the correct preventive and treatment measures in an effort to raise the awareness of prevention as top priority. The main thread of the book is clear, content substantial, explanation thorough, and tone intimate. On reflection after reading the book, one could not only consolidate but also expand one's knowledge. Comprehensively compact in content, it is indeed a multidisciplinary book written with a shifting perspective. It is a collection of emotional epigrams that is imbued with humanistic sentimentality.

Nowadays, medical model transfers from a biomedical model to a bio-psycho-social medical model, which suggests that medicine is not composed of a singular biomedicine, but a multidisciplinary study of biomedicine and humanistic medicine. The purpose of medicine is not so much about the treatment of diseases, but about the prevention of diseases, and the promotion and maintenance of health. A humanistic angle, that is, a brand-new approach that analyses diseases using sociology, shows a global, holistic, progressive and dialectical perspective gained from the theory and practice of health and social development.

Far from being a dull, didactic book, it is a textbook that is written with a heart of benevolence, one that is steeped from the history of diseases to preventive measures with a humanistic concern. With a kind heart for humanity, Professor Wang feels sorrow for mankind's diseases, anxious for its ignorance, and happy for medical progress; she makes suggestions for the treatment of diseases and is delighted when a disease is conquered. Her compassionate and benevolent heart gushes out through each word or line on every reader: be a good man before being a scholar; to make a contribution to the progress of society is not only our ultimate aim, but also a strong motivation for us to knuckle down to medical research. The book is like a clarion call that inspires us to embark on a mission to devote ourselves to global medical care and health services.