

PRIMARY PREVENTION OF MENTAL, NEUROLOGICAL AND PSYCHOSOCIAL DISORDERS*

WHO Pp. ix +113. SwFr.35/US\$31.50. WHO. 1998. ISBN. 92-4-154516X.

This well written book addresses the primary prevention of four disorders selected on the basis of their frequency, severity, importance, controllability and cost. They are mental retardation, epilepsy, suicide and burnout. The primary prevention of each disorder is approached from a broad, public health perspective. Concise but informative reviews of the context and causes of the disorders precede a detailed discussion of preventive measures. A cost-benefit analysis is presented.

The section on mental retardation particularly addresses iodine deficiency, Down's syndrome, fetal alcohol syndrome and phenylketonuria. Preventive measures discussed for suicide include gun control, gas detoxification and responsible media reporting. I was pleasantly surprised to find burnout selected as one of the four major conditions addressed in the book. A useful review and comprehensive bibliography are provided for this important but neglected area of study. Preventive strategies range from stress management and supervisor training to modifying job structure and organisational policy.

The book is a brief but authoritative document. It will be most useful for policy makers, and professionals and academics whose interests or work touch on the preventive aspects of mental health. For these purposes the cost of the book is reasonable.

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