



Book Review AMJ 2013, 6, 8

Control of non-communicable diseases in Nepal: Scientific, social and spiritual perspectives

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In a previous book review I had written about the book 'Struggle for social service in Nepal' by the noted Nepalese cardiologist and public health activist, Dr Mrigendra Raj Pandey. Recently Dr. Pandey has written a book on non-communicable diseases in Nepal based on a public oration delivered by the author as part of an invitation by the Nepal Public Health Foundation.

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are becoming an increasing public health problem all over the world. NCDs like cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) account for over 60% of deaths with 80% of these being in low and middle income countries. The author starts the book with the interesting story of Nepal's King Tribhuvan who suffered a heart attack in the early 1940s and the physician, JC Gupta had to fly in an ECG machine from Kolkata in India. Unfortunately on reaching Kathmandu the machine did not work and a substitute had to be flown in. During the 1960s cardiovascular diseases were not commonly diagnosed in Nepal and there were only 150 cases of myocardial infarction admitted in Bir hospital, the oldest hospital in Nepal between the period from 1960 to 1968. The first intensive care unit/cardiac care unit was inaugurated by King Birendra in Bir hospital on 25 February 1975.

A recent hospital-based study cited in the book concluded that NCDs accounted for around 35% of total hospital admissions in a hospital in Nepal. In his previous book on struggle for social service the author described in detail his work with COPD in the mountainous Jumla district of Nepal. Indoor air pollution caused by poor ventilation and improperly designed wood burning stoves was a major cause of COPD among women. The author invested a lot of time and effort on designing better stoves and ensuring their adoption by village households in various parts of the nation.

The increasing prevalence of hypertension in Bhadrabas during the years from 1981 to 2006 underlines the changing

trends in NCDs in the country. The prevalence of hypertension increased from around 6% in 1981 to around 35% in 2006. In the book the author has brought together data from a number of sources about important NCDs in Nepal.

The author briefly describes the NCD Alliance, a global civil society network formed to tackle the increasing burden of NCDs. He also describes Nepal's crusade against NCDs and the regional civil society meeting on NCDs held in Kathmandu in 2011 resulting in the Kathmandu declaration on NCDs. The author describes how disease can result from imbalance and problems in the relationship between the individual and factors in his/her internal and external environment. The link between disease and spirituality is the most interesting part of the book and I would have liked the author to dwell on these in greater detail. The book is based on a public oration delivered by the author which may be a limitation in terms of coverage of material and organisation.

The book would be of interest to everyone interested in the rising prevalence of communicable diseases in Nepal and other developing nations.

About the book:

MR Pandey. Control of Non-Communicable Diseases in Nepal: Scientific, Social, and Spiritual Perspectives. Kathmandu: Mrigendra Samjhana Medical Trust. 2013.

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