



## Book Review AMJ 2013, 6, 9

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### World Health Statistics 2013

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Up-to-date unbiased information about health and illness in different countries of the world helps identify areas where programs and measures are effective and also identify weaknesses requiring attention. Each year, the Department of Health Statistics and Information Systems of the World Health Organization (WHO) produces the World Health Statistics. This report provides information about life expectancy and mortality, cause-specific mortality and morbidity, selected infectious diseases, health services coverage, risk factors, health systems, health expenditure, health inequities and demographic and socioeconomic statistics.

The annual report documents progress member states are making towards achieving the millennium development goals (MDGs). The report uses data from the Global Health Observatory (<http://www.who.int/gho/en/>) but does not detail the margins of uncertainty involved in measurements. This year's publication also highlights summaries on the topics of reducing the health gaps between the world's most-advantaged and least-advantaged countries, and on current trends in official development assistance (ODA) for health. The book is divided into three parts. The first deals with health-related millennium development goals (MDGs), the second concerns itself with selected topics while part three is concerned with global health indicators. Part 1 has well-designed charts showing the MDGs according to countries and according to the WHO regions.

Many countries have made significant progress towards improving their life expectancy at birth but there is substantial variation with a low of 47 years to a high of 83 years. War is a major factor impeding progress towards increasing life expectancy. The African region still has the world's lowest life expectancy and many other health indicators. The subsection on health services coverage will be of special interest to many including health planners and policy makers. The subsection titled 'Risk factors' in section three describes indicators like percentage of population using improved drinking-water sources, percentage using improved sanitation, percentage using solid fuels, percentage of infants exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life and the preterm birth rate. The subsection on health systems and the percentage median

availability of essential medicines and median price ratio of selected generic medicines were of special interest to us. Unfortunately this information is not available for many countries. The subsection on health expenditure also contains interesting data especially about how health care is financed. Subsection nine about demographic and socioeconomic statistics provides a snapshot of countries with regard to various indicators.

The book will be of special help to health researchers who often need baseline data about a country or a region while conducting research. Health planners, health science students, teachers of health sciences and all those interested in health and human welfare will find the book of interest. The book is well designed and produced and can be freely downloaded from the WHO website.

#### **About the book:**

World Health Organization. World Health Statistics 2013. ISBN 978 92 4 156458 8. The book can be freely downloaded from [http://www.who.int/gho/publications/world\\_health\\_statistics/2013/en/](http://www.who.int/gho/publications/world_health_statistics/2013/en/)

Copies can also be purchased from WHO Press, World Health Organisation, 20 Avenue Appia, 1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland (tel.: +41 22 791 3264; fax: +41 22 791 4857; e-mail: [bookorders@who.int](mailto:bookorders@who.int)).