

Books & Electronic Media

Youth: choices and change

Authors: Cecilia Breinbauer & Matilde

Maddaleno

Publisher: Pan American Health Organization, Washington, DC, USA, 2005

ISBN: 92 75 11594 X; softcover, 392 pages; price CHF 50 (in developing countries CHF 35)

Having tried to parent adolescents over the last decade or so, I was interested to read this almost 400-page compendium, which brings together a broad range of issues around adolescent development. Its subtitle, "Promoting healthy behaviours in adolescents", firmly sets the context of its health-based agenda, as would be expected from its publisher, the Pan American Health Organization, but what is impressive about the text is its holistic approach. Clearly, adolescence is about a huge mixture of inter-related and changing factors, biological, cognitive and socioemotional. The authors have done an excellent job in dealing with these complex issues. How choices for positive lifestyles and health can be facilitated and supported is a hugely difficult area for public health planners worldwide.

But this brings me to an important question: who will read and use this book? In the Preface it is hoped that local health promoters and others who play significant roles in adolescents' lives will find it useful — and no doubt some

will. These people, though, tend to be busy and under-resourced, and getting to grips with a heavy volume like this that approaches adolescence from an academic perspective may be too much to expect of them. If I were responsible for a local adolescent health programme with limited resources, I would need to know how to design and implement activities locally that might maximize the impact of the programme among the target population. Should it be a clinic with health professionals offering condoms and safe-sex messages — or a café to chill out in, with peer support? Unfortunately I am not sure that I would really be able to find a lot of help with making these kinds of policy decisions within this book.

On a more positive note, it is a well-researched and compiled text that will certainly be of use to another potential readership — the academic and research communities who study the needs of adolescents and design and

evaluate interventions for promoting adolescent health. At least half of the book deals with theories and models for health promotion and behaviour change among adolescents, and this systematic approach will certainly be helpful to those approaching these issues from a more theoretical perspective.

At a practical level, there are some niggles about the book. Although it has a good list of references and web resources, there is no index! For a huge and complex work like this, it is frustrating to have to search the whole volume for a particular topic. Also, for some reason the chapter running heads and page numbers have been set in extremely small type and printed, not as is conventional, along the top and bottom edge, respectively, but rather on the vertical edge of the page; artistic maybe, but not conducive to easily finding one's way around the book. ■

Peter Byass^a

Call for Papers — Public Health Reviews

The *Bulletin* welcomes submissions for the Public Health Reviews section. We are seeking evidence-based review articles that focus on an important aspect of a particular disease or condition or public health policy and which are likely to be of general interest to our readership. Papers should have no more than 3000 words and have a non-structured abstract. No more than 50 references should be cited. Papers received will be subject to the *Bulletin's* usual peer review process.

WHO Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) on immunization: request for nominations

WHO solicits proposals for nominations for current and future vacancies on its Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) on immunization. Nominations for a currently vacant seat for a member from the African Region have to be submitted by 30 June 2006. Other nominations for members from all regions of the world are welcome without a specific deadline.

SAGE is the principal advisory group to WHO for vaccines and immunization. SAGE reports directly to the Director-General and is advising WHO on overall global policies and strategies, ranging from vaccine and technology research and development, to delivery of immunization and its linkages with other health interventions. Its remit is not restricted to childhood and immunization but extends to all vaccine-preventable diseases as well as all age groups (<http://www.who.int/immunization/sage/en/>).

Members are acknowledged experts with an outstanding record of achievement in their own field and an understanding of the immunization issues covered by the committee. Appointment of members is made by the Director-General upon the proposal of an external selection panel. Consideration will be given to ensuring appropriate geographic representation and gender balance.

Instructions for nominations are available at the following link http://www.who.int/immunization/sage_nominations/en/index.html

Dr Philippe Duclos
SAGE Executive Secretary

^a Umeå International School of Public Health, Umeå, SE-90185, Sweden (email: peter.byass@epiph.umu.se).