

Book Review

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Health and Development : A Perspective, Diet, Disease and Development by Edmundson, W.C., Sukhatme, P.V. and Edmundson, S.A., Macmillan India Ltd., 1992, Rs. 145/-.

This book is an attempt to deal with the health and development problems of Third World Countries in a holistic and practical manner. It builds on Professor Sukhatme's understanding of malnutrition and its measurement as articulated by him in the late 70s and early 80s as part of the wellknown debate between him and Professor V.M. Dandekar (Dandekar 1982, Sukhatme 1981) to which others too had contributed (Gopalan 1983, Banerji 1981). The book presents a definite perspective for public health theory and practice putting together the work of all the three authors on various public health issues of Third World Countries with special reference to India and Indonesia where the Edmundsons have conducted field research for years.

The preface and the first chapter lay out the basic principle that health is a dynamic process influenced by the complex interactions between the individual and his surrounding cultural, economic, physical and biologic environments. Analysing the health situation in developing countries, they highlight the primary importance of malnutrition and infectious diseases and the symbiotic relationship between these two. In line with Professor Sukhatme's earlier argument about malnutrition being less of a problem than it is made out to be, the authors now attempt to show that direct interventions to control infectious diseases are the more effective means of improving health and nutrition status and that there is no need for direct interventions for improving dietary intakes. A pithy sentence sets out the 'hierarchies of health' - 'Disease is a more important component of health than diet' (p.16).

The second chapter highlights the health situation further through the examples of India and Indonesia emphasizing the differences in health status between different regions and age groups and the secular trends over the last few decades. Chapters 3 to 7 deal with major nutritional problems - protein and malnutrition, energy intake and human productivity, Vitamin - A deficiency, goitre and anemia. The thread running through all these is that quality of diets is more important than the quantity. This argument, incidentally, has meant their going back on Professor Sukhatme's earlier contribution in another major debate in the 70s on protein deficiency and its importance vis-a-vis energy deficiency (Sukhatme,1972).