



## **Book Review: The Development of Modern Epidemiology: Personal reports from those who were there**

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## **Book Review: The Development of Modern Epidemiology: Personal reports from those who were there**

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### **BOOK REVIEW**

Name of the book : THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN EPIDEMIOLOGY  
Personal reports from those who were there

Edited by : Walter W. Holland, Jorn Olsen, Charles Du V Florey

Publishers : Oxford University Press

Year of First Publication : 2007

Edition : First

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The concerned book published by Oxford University Press on 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of International Epidemiology Association is an excellent piece of collections of the experiences of eminent epidemiologist all over the world. Spread over about 450 pages the book is divided into 5 sections containing in all 37 chapters.

The title itself is suggestive of the contents of the book. It takes the reader into the history of Modern Epidemiology in last 2-3 centuries through the personal experiences of the contributors. A few of them have also described the development of epidemiology since 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The book maintains its unique style of starting each chapter with the personal experience of

the author in which most of them have elaborated on how they were attracted to the field of epidemiology and which of their experiences lead them to continue with the speciality. Each chapter has been authored by an eminent personality in the concerned field who has contributed significantly to its development in last few decades. Each author has its own style of narrating the experiences which has given the due diversity to the contents of the book.

The contribution to the first section of the book, 'History and setting the scene' starts with the lucid introduction given by the three editors. Subsequent chapters set the scene properly while describing the relationship of social medicine with clinical medicine,

politics and wars. The origin and contribution of International Epidemiology Association to epidemiology has been described in brief. The epidemiological methods and concepts in nineteenth century and their influence on the twentieth century follow in line. Relevant information regarding the valuable contribution of some of the important epidemiologist has been given in detail. Various epidemiological methods used in the past have been touched upon in an interesting manner. Then the light is thrown on the relationship of epidemiological concepts of first and second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The first section of the book ends with the detail analysis of the contribution of the epidemiology to the world health including discussion on some of the controversial issues.

The second section deals with the specific disease areas of concern. Here development of epidemiology with respect to important diseases and public health problems has been dealt with in detail. The work of Richard Doll on cancer epidemiology has been too impressive and certainly inspiring for the new aspirants to the field. The unfolding of various risk factors for cardiovascular and chronic respiratory diseases is given in an impressive manner. The endeavour of J. N. Morris deserves the special mention here as far as the epidemiology of non communicable diseases is concerned. The development of mental health and perinatal epidemiology give the evidence of the strength of the subject to deal with some of the complicated clinical situations. How epidemiology can contribute to reduce the morbidity and impact of wars is a thrilling experience to read certainly. The useful description of the said topic makes each and every epidemiologist a little more proud

about his/her speciality. The battle of epidemiology with various emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases including tuberculosis and malaria is an interesting one. So many challenges given by the responsible organism to clinicians and epidemiologists and repeated attempts by these stalwarts to conquer the micro-organisms are described in lively manner.

The third section of the book has elucidated upon the concept of applied epidemiology. The description of epidemiology as a basic tool for public health and various obstacles concerned thereof because of the interventions from administrative and legislative class in the coordinated functioning of both has been given there. What an important contribution epidemiology can make to health service research is explained in detail. The chapters on occupational, social and nutritional epidemiology give proper justice to the broad scope of the subject.

The fourth section on methodology has nicely explained the theoretical development of various concepts over the period of time. Various experiences of the concerned author regarding outbreak investigation are interesting to read. The section also explains how things are becoming easy for epidemiologists with the advent of advanced computers and useful software with the progress of science. Various data sources available for the subject experts since past, their development over the period of time, their expansion with advances in technology and the way these data sources can be utilised for the betterment of operational efficiency of various fields is illustrated in a very nice manner. The development of modern

epidemiology including the concept of clinical epidemiology and the important contribution of International Clinical Epidemiology Network (INCLEN) in the infrastructure and trained manpower development all over the world makes the reader assured about bright future of the speciality.

The final section gives the details of the development of epidemiology in various continents/countries illustrating the importance of unique experience of each region.

The separate name and subject index in the end facilitate the navigation for readers.

Overall the book makes its impression as an important landmark in world history of Modern Epidemiology. Each and every budding epidemiologist and the new aspirants of the speciality should go through it so as to realise the power of Epidemiology!

**Competing Interests:** The author has no competing interests to declare.