

## Book Review

### ***Transforming Health Promotion Practice: Concepts, Issues and Applications***

**Edited by Lynne Young and Virginia Hayes  
Philadelphia: F. A. Davis, 2002. 340 pp.  
ISBN: 0-803-60814-4**

**Reviewed by Catherine P. Gros**

*Transforming Health Promotion Practice: Concepts, Issues and Applications* is an important departure from mainstream nursing texts. In this bold and provocative collection of writings, the ultimate goal of editors Lynne Young and Virginia Hayes is to shape current and future nursing practice. Critical questions are raised through an examination of historical and professional trends and through the presentation and analysis of theoretical literature, clinical data, and research-based evidence. Key issues and principles come alive through the use of clinical exemplars, and various personal accounts are used to illustrate the struggles and realities faced by nurses as they attempt to implement health-promoting practices within the current system.

Rooted in a largely postmodern perspective, the contributors' views on health promotion draw upon principles put forth in the Ottawa Charter (World Health Organization, 1986). Accordingly, health promotion is defined as "a collaborative process in which health professionals work with clients (defined as individuals, families, communities and populations) to gain insights into social, organizational, political, and personal patterns that strengthen or disrupt health and wholeness and to take action toward improved health" (p. 4).

This being said, the authors go beyond the rhetoric to examine how these ideas are applied in practice. For example, nursing strategies such as advocating and empowering are specific approaches that can be used at the bedside to help individuals and families take control over and improve their health. Moreover, the contributors' expanded view of nursing highlights the social, political, and ecological factors that are known to have a powerful influence on nursing care. Therefore, descriptions of specific approaches to guide practice at this level are also addressed. These include strategies such as building public policy, creating supportive environments for learning and health, strengthening com-

munity action, conducting health promotion research, and reorienting health services.

In terms of its structure and content, the 340-page text is divided into 24 chapters grouped under five themes: Foundations of Health Promotion Practice; Key Concepts for Transforming Health Promotion Practice; Challenges and Controversies: Revisiting and Recreating Knowledge; Health Promotion Research; and A Critique of Transformative Health Promotion Practice. The following sampling of chapter titles provides a flavour of the nature and scope of the book's contents: Beyond Interpersonal Communication: The Significance of Relationship; Public Participation in Health Care Decision Making; Emancipatory Politics...and the Health Professional as Social Activist; The Human Genome Project: Implications for Nursing Practice; Promoting Health Through Participatory Action Research; and Enhancing Health Promotion Through Cooperative Inquiry. Each chapter ends with a brief summary and review. The book's contributors, most of whom are nurses, are clearly committed to the philosophy of health promotion. They possess in-depth knowledge of the concepts and demonstrate a clear understanding regarding the application to practice of these ideas. Written primarily with both practitioners and undergraduate and graduate nursing students in mind, this book would also appeal to nursing educators, researchers, managers, and policy-makers in all areas and at all levels of practice.

Throughout this volume, the importance of learning through critical reflection is a consistent theme. In addition to the critical questions and issues raised within the authors' own analyses, each chapter is punctuated with a series of reflective questions for the reader to consider. Furthermore, the editors "walk the talk" by including a final chapter in which experts from outside the profession critique the work as a whole. Co-authors Lawrence Green, a writer and researcher with international experience in the field of health promotion, and Mark Daniel present a critical review of each chapter.

From the theoretical discussions through to the practical examples, what is professed at the outset of this book is delivered simply and consistently, with conceptual clarity and with structural and intellectual integrity. For the contributors, closely adhering to a collaborative, person-centred approach is not the best way to promote health: it is the only way. Young and Hayes argue that if we as nurses are truly to make a difference, then we must take charge of our profession and ensure that the familiar concept of health promotion (e.g., collaboration, learning partnerships) is consistently applied in practice. The evidence on current health-care practices clearly indicates otherwise, and it is in this context

that the book *Transforming Health Promotion Practice* comes to represent a timely contribution towards the goal of moving nursing forward.

**Reference**

World Health Organization. (1986). *Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion*. Ottawa: Canadian Public Health Association and Health & Welfare Canada.

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