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Measurement in health promotion and protection

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Measurement in health promotion and protection

Edited by

T. Abelin
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The World Health Organization is a specialized agency of the United Nations with primary responsibility for international health matters and public health. Through this Organization, which was created in 1948, the health professions of some 160 countries exchange their knowledge and experience with the aim of making possible the attainment by all citizens of the world by the year 2000 of a level of health that will permit them to lead a socially and economically productive life.

The WHO Regional Office for Europe is one of six regional offices throughout the world, each with its own programme geared to the particular health problems of the countries it serves. The European Region has 32 active Member States,^a and is unique in that a large proportion of them are industrialized countries with highly advanced medical services. The European programme therefore differs from those of other regions in concentrating on the problems associated with industrial society. In its strategy for attaining the goal of "health for all by the year 2000" the Regional Office is arranging its activities in three main areas: promotion of lifestyles conducive to health; reduction of preventable conditions; and provision of care that is adequate, accessible and acceptable to all.

The Region is also characterized by the large number of languages spoken by its peoples, and the resulting difficulties in disseminating information to all who may need it. The Regional Office publishes in four languages — English, French, German and Russian — and applications for rights of translation into other languages are most welcome.

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Foreword

In health, as in any other area, measurement is essential in knowing where we are and where we are going. The first joint publication of the International Epidemiological Association (IEA) and the WHO Regional Office for Europe in 1979 (Measurement of levels of health, European Series No. 7) provided information on concepts and processes in the measurement of health and thus addressed mainly the first of these issues. At the IXth Scientific Meeting of the IEA in 1981, a sequel was proposed, to deal with the measurement of improvements in health through programmes of disease control and through health promotion. This book should provide the people responsible for such programmes, and those who attempt to measure the impact of health programmes, with the beginnings of a resolution of the second issue, an indication of where we are going.

Concepts and tools of measurement in health progress have developed rapidly during the time (1982–1985) required for the preparation of the manuscript. In many instances, descriptions of the concepts or methods were less easy to obtain than illustrations of their everyday use in health promotion and the improvement of health. Since the problems of improving and promoting health apply throughout the world, these illustrations have been sought from developing and developed countries alike.

Concurrently with the development of the manuscript, the Member States of the World Health Organization began to assess their progress towards the goal of health for all. In the European Region, this implied the development of regional targets and indicators, so that the detailed evaluation would cover the specific problems of the Region and the proposed solutions, an important part of which is health promotion. The evaluation of progress towards health for all in the European Region of WHO has already brought to light the dearth of appropriate indicators that transcend the traditional indicators of mortality and morbidity in such areas as disabilities, lifestyles, the impact of environmental health, and the role of the community in the definition and development of health services. The experience gained in the last five years is closely reflected in some of the contributions to the third part of this book; the two final chapters, on the role of indicators and on the new health promotion programme in the Regional Office, are a particular indication of the close relationship of the philosophy behind this book to the concepts and applications of health for all.

J.E. Asvall
WHO Regional Director
for Europe

Preface

Measurement in health has long played an important role among the activities of the International Epidemiological Association, as clearly shown in the book published jointly by the World Health Organization and the International Epidemiological Association in 1979. The measurement of health promotion has in recent years been a central issue in scientific meetings of the International Epidemiological Association. The present book continues and updates work on these concerns.

The book reviews the overall concepts of health and health promotion, as well as the important process of promoting health and its social and political implications. Methods of measuring health, essential for health care planning and evaluation, are presented. The final part of the book includes a number of examples of the use of such measurements for assessing progress in health and monitoring the results of specific health promotion programmes.

The goal of the World Health Organization and its Member States is the achievement of health for all; it is hoped that this book will help everyone involved in implementing health promotion activities, in monitoring their results and thus working towards this goal. For epidemiologists, this publication should exemplify one of the most important uses of epidemiology.

J. Mosbech
President
International Epidemiological Association

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