



Arlene Eisenberg Howard Eisenberg

ALIVE AND WELL
DECISIONS IN HEALTH

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Arlene Eisenberg

Consultant in Health Education
Rockland Community College

Howard Eisenberg

Senior Editor
Medical Economics

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ALIVE AND WELL DECISIONS IN HEALTH

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To our parents
who taught us the importance of good health,
and our children
who taught us so much about today's
college student.

IN APPRECIATION

It may well be true that a person can learn more from writing one book than from reading a thousand books. In writing *Alive and Well*, we learned from many sources:

- *Educational institutions* Georgetown University, the University of California, Pennsylvania State University, and Harvard Medical Area newsletters have been particularly informative.
- *United States government publications and releases* They have kept us up to date, and perhaps a bit ahead, medically.
- *Voluntary agencies* Organizations such as the American Cancer Society and the American Heart Association have been of considerable help.
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We wish, too, to express our appreciation to the many students, present and past, who shared their thoughts about what a college health text should be.

There would probably be no book in hand at all if it were not for those who helped in its physical preparation from research through typing and fact checking: Esther Makower, Harry Scharaga, Barbara Wahl, Sandee Eisenberg, Evan Eisenberg, and especially Heidi Eisenberg who contributed in a hundred different ways. We thank Sandee, Evan, and Heidi, as well as our extended family, for their patience at times when *Alive and Well* usurped their places.

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Finally, thank you to someone who has been with us from the beginning, guiding us through the unfamiliar labyrinth of textbook writing, our editor Alison Meerschaert. You cannot tell a book by its cover, but if you can tell it by its editor, *Alive and Well* will be first rate.

In the pages that follow, we share with you what we have learned. We hope it will keep you *Alive and Well*.

Arlene Eisenberg
Howard Eisenberg

INTRODUCTION

Every man [or woman] is a fluid that becomes a solid . . . a history in the making, a personality that is being created. And our progress, or our disintegration, depends on physical, chemical, and psychological factors, on viruses and bacteria, on physiological influences and, finally, on *our own will*.

The last three words of these lines penned in 1935 by Alexis Carrel, Nobel Prize winner in medicine and physics, point clearly to the rationale behind this health text. We are buffeted and shaped by an infinite variety of factors, many uncontrollable, that surround us. But in the end, the most influential factor is the human mind and how effectively we use it.

Many health authorities today agree that the individual can play a significant role in improving health care, reducing unnecessary and premature deaths, and controlling upward-spiraling health costs. Professor Eli Ginzberg of Columbia University has suggested that patients are an immense, untapped health resource, and that educating the American people to do more about their own health would be a lot more economical and effective than producing more doctors.

When it comes to health, then, we are to a great extent masters of our own destiny. It is to this concept that *Alive and Well: Decisions in Health* is dedicated.

This book does not stand alone. It is part of a virtual revolution in health care in the United States that is taking place in doctors' offices, hospitals, schools, clinics, and community centers throughout the country, and that is being spread by books,

newspapers, TV, radio, programmed learning tapes, and records. The basic concepts of this revolution in health education are the major themes of *Alive and Well*:

- **Individual decision making** The decisions *you* make every day—about eating, drinking, loving, working, playing, exercising, as well as about specific medical questions such as when to take an aspirin or when to see a doctor—will have more impact on your health than anything the medical community does. *Alive and Well* not only gives you the information you need to make sound decisions, but examines the decision-making process as well.
- **Preventive medicine** An early “ounce of prevention” added to your daily life will do a great deal more to protect you from heart disease, many cancers, and a wide variety of other health problems than belated pounds of cure from a physician. Throughout *Alive and Well*, the emphasis is on prevention.
- **Health consumerism** As an alert consumer, you try to be as informed as possible before deciding to purchase an automobile, a house, or an appliance. As a health consumer, you should be similarly well informed. *Alive and Well* provides a wealth of health consumer information on everything from contact lenses to sex clinics, from food labels to nursing homes, to assist you in making educated health decisions. A variety of Health Consumer Tips appear throughout the text to guide you in becoming an aware health consumer. Who’s Who in Health Care sections will acquaint you with the professionals best able to help you with various health problems.
- **The patient-physician partnership** With the revolution has come a decline in the medical mystique that put the physician on a pedestal and ignored the responsibility of the patient in making health care decisions. Today many patients recognize that they need to take a more active role in their own health care, in partnership with physicians, dentists, and other health care workers. When to Seek Help sections (covering everything from depression to respiratory ills) and Communicating with the Physician sections will help you develop a sound working patient-physician partnership.
- **Self-care** Many authorities believe that the patient-partner can take on many simple medical tasks: taking blood pressure, pulse, and respiration readings; doing simple examinations of skin, mouth, breasts, prostate, ears, and throat; handling common emergencies resulting from accidents, heart attacks, choking, and adverse drug reactions; and treating the up to 70 percent of illnesses that do not demand a physician’s care (e.g., colds, upset stomachs, minor wounds). The numerous Self-Care sections in *Alive and Well* will help you to master many of these procedures. The Treatment sections of disease listings include simple remedies for illnesses responsive to self-care.
- **Open discussion** Health is an area of dynamic growth and, thus, constant ferment in which differing, sometimes conflicting opinions coexist. It is our belief that the informed health consumer—you—should be exposed to varying opinions. Thus we have attempted, where appropriate, to present balanced views of controversial issues. Absolute balance is, of course, impossible. At times it may seem that one or another view predominates. However, we hope that you will not automatically make it yours. Your views should be based on *your* values as well as on the facts, and should be reached through enlightened decision making (a process described in Chapter 1). For topics which are the focus of sharp controversy—such as abortion

and homosexuality—we have added Opinion sections that present major points of view.

Each chapter begins with a list of key questions entitled “What’s Ahead. . . .” Look for the answers as you read, and you will more easily grasp the major objectives and concepts of *Alive and Well*.

Few courses you take in college have the potential to make as great a difference in your life as does a health course. As Dr. William Hettler, Director of the Wellness Center at the University of Wisconsin has suggested, what you learn in a health course can give you more vitality and more years for the things you enjoy most—friends, books, skiing, sex. We kept this suggestion in mind as we wrote *Alive and Well*. We hope you will keep it in mind as you read.

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