

Resource review

Brownson RC, Baker EA, Leet TL, *et al.*
Evidence-based public health. Oxford:
 Oxford University Press, 2003. ISBN 0-
 19-514376-0

Evidence-based public health can be purchased at
www.oup.co.uk for £25.

This book provides an introduction to finding, understanding, and using evidence to protect and improve the health of communities. It was written by a group of teachers and researchers from the Saint Louis University School of Public Health. The material was developed from the courses they teach, and as the authors say themselves in the preface, the format in the book closely reflects the structure and content of their course entitled "Evidence-Based Decision-Making in Public Health" aimed at midlevel managers in US state health agencies.

The book is divided into 9 chapters, which lead a reader through the various stages of evidence-based public health. It starts with a chapter on the need for evidence-based public health, and in subsequent chapters covers assessing the evidence, understanding and applying analytic tools, defining the question, searching the literature and organising information, developing policy options and action plans, and evaluation. Each chapter provides a competent introduction to the relevant topic for someone with no or limited experience of evidence-based medicine or epidemiology.

Each chapter concludes with a list of suggested further reading and selected websites. I found the list of websites to be a particularly useful feature of the book. They are mainly, but not exclusively, US websites. Most of the links work. Many of the websites were new to me and provided useful sources of information of which I was previously unaware.

In summary, this book provides a useful and clearly written introduction for non-specialists interested in the need for, and practice of, evidence-based public health. It is based on course material developed and prepared by experienced US public health teachers. An added bonus that beginners, experienced researchers, and practitioners may all find useful is a well selected list of websites that support the practice of evidence-based public health.

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RATINGS:

Methods ★★★★★

Usefulness ★★★★★