

Book review

Promoting Health in Aotearoa New Zealand

Category: Book Reviews / Non-fiction

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Audience: For Mental Health Workforce

Summary: Brings together a comprehensive picture of health promotion in Aotearoa, with a particular focus on Māori health promotion



Promoting Health in Aotearoa New Zealand fills a significant gap in health promotion literature that is relevant to Aotearoa. Drawing on the rich experience and knowledge of 25 contributors, the book brings together a comprehensive picture of health promotion in Aotearoa, with a particular focus on Māori health promotion. As such, health promotion in a unique New Zealand context is clearly defined and articulated. For example, the editors have intentionally and successfully created a health promotion text that “integrates Māori and Pākehā analysis, consistent with an approach that emphasises the Treaty [of Waitangi] partnership and indigenous rights”.

Starting with an outline of the history of health promotion in Aotearoa, the book moves on to broadening your understanding of Māori health promotion, including Māori health promotion models and what these look like in practice. Pacific health promotion and health promotion with immigrant communities are covered, with great examples that bring health promotion work with these communities to life.

The fundamentals of health promotion

Promoting Health in Aotearoa New Zealand then focuses on fundamentals of health promotion: evaluation and intervention design, ethics, equity and politics. Populations (specifically children and young people) and settings as a focus for health promotion are described, along with the challenges and opportunities for developing the health promotion workforce. The book concludes with a chapter on critical reflections and future challenges.

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Health promotion is the cornerstone of creating positive mental health. While there are limited references to mental health, the principles, values and practice that underpins the work of the Mental Health Foundation flow through the book, and you are reminded that “good health is a foundation for the achievement of potential for individual, groups of people (including families, whānau, hapū and iwi), and society as a whole.” At the same time, there are key health issues of concern and health inequalities are increasing, to which health promotion can make a difference.

The book is engaging and interesting to read. It includes a good balance between theory and practice, peppered with local examples of initiatives that bring health promotion to life. *Promoting Health in Aotearoa New Zealand* raises the challenges for health promotion, such as the need for ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of health promotion activities, and the influence of political ideology. It’s the “go to” text for all health promotion practitioners, students and teachers in Aotearoa, and internationally for anyone interested in indigenous health.

Reviewed by Kathryn Nemec, Project Manager, Mental Health Foundation

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