

SARS in context. Memory, history, policy

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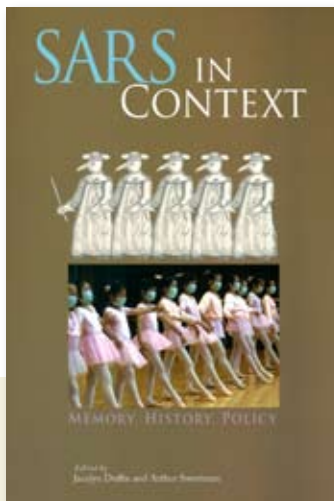
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The final section, "Policy," includes an interesting article on the economic effects of SARS, which were substantially less severe than media reports would have had us believe. There is also a discussion on the legislative roles of local, provincial, federal, and international bodies during medical outbreaks and the resulting challenges in managing these situations. This leaves us wondering whether Canada will be better prepared the next time a new epidemic comes knocking, as it inevitably will.

—Ann Duggan MD FCFP DTM&H MPH

Dr Duggan is a family practitioner who works in health policy with Citizenship and Immigration Canada in Ottawa, Ont.

OVERALL RATING Good

STRENGTHS Presents multiple perspectives on an important event in Canada's medical history

WEAKNESSES Articles are independent of one another, leading to some repetition, lack of flow, and highly variable ease of reading

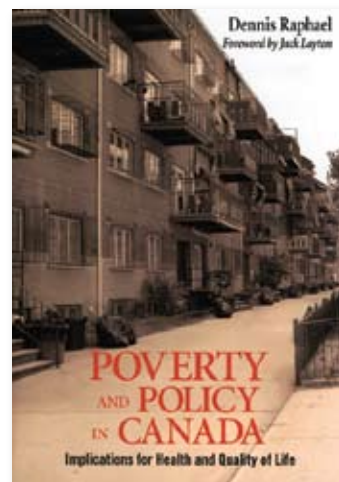
AUDIENCE Practitioners interested in the history of medicine or public health responses to infectious diseases

This book is a series of essays originating from a symposium on sudden acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) given at Queen's University in February 2004 to an audience of primarily medical students, and, as such, is not specifically targeted to family physicians. It is not a book that will tell you how to approach or respond at a practical level to an unknown disease entity in your practice; however, it might help you put the experience of SARS into perspective. Most of the focus of the book is historical, and the book would have benefited from a chapter on current outbreaks, particularly outbreaks in the international arena within resource-poor settings.

The book is divided into 3 sections. The first, "Memory," includes perspectives of some of the front-line workers in the 2003 outbreak in Toronto, Ont, including that of Dr James Young, then provincial coroner and commissioner of public safety and security—which makes for interesting reading.

In the second section, "History," 5 historians of medicine share their perspectives, conjuring up remembrances of plague and other attempts to manage epidemics before the understanding of germ theory and causality existed. There is a particularly fascinating chapter by Dr Heather MacDougall, who details the history since 1832 of the importation of serious epidemics to Toronto—polio, cholera, typhus, influenza, and smallpox—and the responses to these, which ultimately led to the foundation of the public health system of today.

Poverty and policy in Canada. Implications for health and quality of life



AUTHOR Dennis Raphael

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PUBLISHED 2007/384 pp/\$45.95

OVERALL RATING Excellent

STRENGTHS Comprehensive exploration of the concept, etiology, and consequences of poverty in Canada

WEAKNESSES Dense with information; the explicit political views of the author might be construed as bias

AUDIENCE Health or social service providers working with poor, marginalized, and disenfranchised people

Poverty and Policy in Canada. Implications for Health and Quality of Life provides a “roadmap for the exploration” of the political and economic foundations of poverty in Canada. Divided into 4 parts, each containing 3 to 4 chapters, it considers in turn the definitions and measurements of poverty, the experience of poverty, the consequences of poverty on health and other quality of life indicators, and, lastly, the political and policy underpinnings of poverty in Canada. Each chapter is well laid out with an introductory text, learning objectives, references, and a glossary of terms. This makes it a useful pedagogic resource. The progression of topics throughout the book and the subject matter of individual chapters are methodical and coherent. Chapters can be read in order or taken individually. The book provides an impressive amount of information, generally well supported by references.

In the preface, the author clearly presents his thesis that poverty is the predictable consequence of current Canadian political and economic policies. He presents a useful, intelligent, and provocative insight into the concept and consequences of poverty in Canada while also offering occasionally surprising comparisons with other countries. A foreword by Jack Layton provides a hint of partisan politics to an otherwise academically rigorous work.

Overall, this is a solid and comprehensive book, providing a unique Canadian perspective on a highly problematic and understudied Canadian reality. While its size requires stamina from the reader, it is a valuable resource for those wishing to further their understanding of poverty, its social and political roots, and the way in which it affects Canadians and their communities.

—Katherine D. Rouleau MDCM CCFP MHSc

Dr Rouleau practises family medicine in downtown Toronto, Ont, and is Deputy Chief of the Department of Family and Community Medicine at St Michael's Hospital.

Healthy waters. What every health professional should know about water

AUTHOR Mike Magee

PUBLISHER Spencer Books, 3 Stoneleigh Plaza, Suite 5D, Bronxville, NY 10708, USA;

WEBSITE www.spencerbooks.com

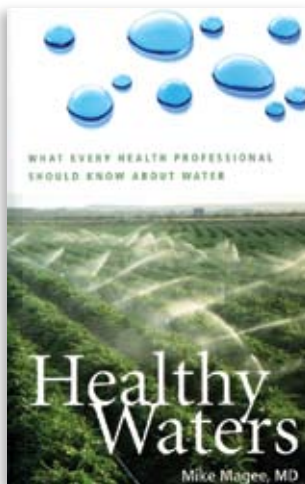
PUBLISHED 2005/160 pp/\$19.95 (US)

OVERALL RATING Fair

STRENGTHS Quick read; important issue; some good references

WEAKNESSES Not enough specifics for health care professionals

AUDIENCE Health professionals



Dr Magee uses the Web (through a weekly Internet-based electronic media program, which is supported by the Pfizer Medical Humanities Initiative) to promote discussion of health issues at a consumer or generalist level. This book covers Dr Magee's journey to understand the global crisis of water as a resource, with respect to its management and subsequent effects on health. It covers issues such as water and agriculture, industry, and energy. Although it includes references from the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the World Bank, and others. Dr Magee uses several figures that don't always add value, and at times the text seems repetitive. Much of the information

would be known to any informed citizen.

In the epilogue, Dr Magee returns full circle to the complexity, interconnectedness, and seriousness of global water issues. The book ends with starting points for health professionals; however, these suggestions are very preliminary.

I agree with Dr Magee that health professionals have much to offer when addressing the global water crisis. But this book was too long to be a concise “call to action” and not long enough to address the expectations raised by the title. Most health professionals want specific effective strategies that address patient, practice, and association concerns.

—Fran Scott MD CCFP FRCPC

Dr Scott is an Associate Medical Officer of Health with Toronto Public Health and Program Director of Community Medicine and an Associate Professor at the University of Toronto in Ontario.