

Preface

There are many good epidemiology textbooks on the market, but most of these are addressed to students of public health or people who do clinical research with epidemiologic methods. There is a need for a short introduction on how epidemiologic methods are used in public health, genetic and clinical epidemiology, because health professionals need to know basic epidemiologic methods covering etiologic as well as prognostic factors of diseases. They need to know more about methodology than introductory texts on public health have to offer.

In some health faculties, epidemiology is not even part of the teaching curriculum. We believe this to be a serious mistake. Medical students are students of all aspects of diseases and health. Without knowing something about epidemiology the clinicians and other health professionals cannot read a growing part of the scientific literature in any reasonably critical way and cannot navigate in the world of “evidence-based medicine and evidence-based prevention.” Without skills in epidemiologic methodology they are in the hands of experts that may not only have an interest in health.

Some health professionals may believe that only common sense is needed to conduct epidemiological studies, but the scientific literature and the public debate on health issues indicate that common sense is often in short supply and may not thrive without some formal training.

Epidemiologic methods play a key role in identifying environmental, social, and genetic determinants of diseases. Clinical epidemiology addresses the transition from disease to health or toward mortality or social or medical handicaps. Public health epidemiology addresses the transition from being healthy to being not healthy. Descriptive epidemiology provides the disease pattern that is needed to look at health in a broad perspective and to set the priorities right. Epidemiology is a basic science of medicine which addresses key questions such as “Who becomes ill?” and “What are important prognostic factors?” Answers to such questions provide the basis for better prevention and treatment of diseases.

Many people contributed to the writing of this book: medical students in Denmark, students of epidemiology at the IEA EEPE summer course in Florence, Italy, and students of public health in Los Angeles. Without technical assistance

from Gitte Nielsen, Jenade Shelley, Nina Hohe and Pam Masangkay the book would never have materialized.

Los Angeles, California
Odense, Denmark
Iowa City, Iowa
Stockholm, Sweden

Jørn Olsen
Kaare Christensen
Jeff Murray
Anders Ekbom

<http://www.springer.com/978-1-4419-1496-5>

An Introduction to Epidemiology for Health
Professionals

Olsen, J.; Christensen, K.; Murray, J.; Ekbom, A.

2010, XII, 163 p., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-1-4419-1496-5