

Preface

HIV/AIDS was first recognized in the early 1980s and since then it has provoked forceful reactions from others. From the onset of the epidemic, HIV/AIDS has been seen not only as a medical condition but also as a stigmatized state. Despite the fact that society now has better understanding about the causes and impacts of HIV/AIDS, stigma and discrimination continue to exist. As Goffman (1963: 70) warns, “familiarity need not reduce contempt”. Numerous studies have pointed to the pervasive nature of stigma and discrimination experienced by persons living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) and their families. This can be seen in many journal articles and reports which have been written to portray stigma and discrimination which occur with PLWHA in many parts of the world. However, there is a lack of a recent book which attempts to put together results from empirical research relating to stigma and discrimination which people living with HIV/AIDS have experienced. This book is written with the intention to fill this gap.

The focus of this book is on issues relevant to stigma and discrimination which have occurred to individuals and groups in different parts of the globe as well as how these individuals and groups attempt to deal with HIV/AIDS. Apart from some theoretical papers situated at the beginning of this volume, most chapters are written by researchers who carry out their research in different parts of the world. These chapters contain empirical information which is based on real-life situations. This information will provide first-hand knowledge to many of us to have better understanding about the lived experiences of people living with HIV/AIDS. It can also be used as a means for PLWHA to deal with stigma and discrimination better and as a resource for healthcare providers to implement socially and culturally appropriate services to assist individuals and groups who are living with HIV/AIDS in many societies. It is my hope that information contained in this volume will, in the near future, help to reduce, and perhaps eradicate, stigma and discrimination that many PLWHA have experienced.

The book will be of interest to healthcare providers who are interested in working with individuals and groups who are living with HIV/AIDS from a cross-cultural perspective. In particular, it will assist health workers in community health centres and

hospitals in understanding issues which are related to HIV/AIDS which may lead to the provision of culturally sensitive health care to people living with HIV/AIDS from different social and cultural backgrounds. The book will be attractive to many lay readers and professionals in organizations which are interested in stigma and discrimination faced by PLWHA from a cross-cultural perspective. It will also be useful as a reference book for students and lecturers in courses like anthropology, sociology, social work, nursing, public health and medicine.

In constructing a book like this, it is impossible to include all groups and from all parts of the world. As readers will see, the volume has missed the inclusion of many groups of people who deserve to be heard and understood. However, I have attempted to include as many groups of people who are living with HIV/AIDS as possible. What is included in this volume will, no doubt, provide crucial information for many readers which would not be easily accessible elsewhere.

In bringing this book to life, I owe my gratitude to many people. First, I would like to thank all contributors in this volume, who worked hard in constructing their chapters and getting them to me in the required time. Second, I should like to thank Esther Otten, the Senior Acquisition Editor of Springer, for believing in the value of this book and for contracting me to edit it. Third, I am grateful to the reviewers of the book who provided useful comments for me to improve many aspects included in this final volume. Last, I am grateful to Lee Koh who helped edit through some chapters for me.

I dedicate this book to my parents who raised their children amidst poverty in Thailand. They believed that only education would improve the lives of their children and hence worked hard to send us to school. This opportunity has allowed me to grow thus far. I also dedicate this book to my two daughters who have been part of my life and for understanding the ongoing busy life of their mother.

Melbourne
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Reference

- Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

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