

# Preface

*To raise new questions, new possibilities, to regard old problems from a new angle, requires creative imagination and marks real advance in science.*

Albert Einstein

The maturity of an evolving science is marked by the development of its own theories, ethics, methodologies and lexicon. Prevention research has progressed over the past three decades towards becoming the basis for a new science, prevention science, defined as: a science that tests theory-based hypotheses towards enhancing or refining the process that makes individuals' engagement in healthy and non-risky behaviours more likely (Biglan et al., 2011).

The establishment of the American Society for Prevention Research (SPR) in 1991 and the European Society for Prevention Research (EU-SPR) in 2010 has increased the recognition that the prevention of mental, emotional and behavioural problems shares similar approaches, requires similar research designs and warrants its own terminology, skills and competencies. In response, in 2011, SPR published Standards of Knowledge for the Science of Prevention (<http://www.preventionresearch.org/Society%20for%20Prevention%20Research%20Standards%20of%20Knowledge.pdf>) that laid out the foundation for this new field, drawing from epidemiology, psychology, medicine, sociology, social work, education, economics, public health, biostatistics, geography, anthropology, policy analysis, criminology, neuroscience and genetics. The work lays out three domains, Epidemiology, Intervention Development, and Research Methodology (to include design and statistical applications) and the prevention-related competencies of each.

Taking the Standards of Knowledge document as a point of departure, the focus of this book lies in documenting the state of the art in prevention knowledge while at the same time emphasizing the importance of developmental benchmarks and competencies as a basis for understanding vulnerability, socialisation and decision making. In addition, the book integrates implementation and prevention science, and, presents cutting-edge concepts related to alternative research designs for evaluations of prevention interventions and the integration of cost assessment into prevention program evaluations.

As with any other science, we believe that Prevention Science should not be confined by geographic or cultural boundaries. To start the international dialogue, we therefore wanted to include authors from outside the United States and were pleased by the enthusiastic response of our European colleagues, many of whom are members of the EU-SPR. We wish to acknowledge with great appreciation the contributors to this first book on prevention science. Their names and affiliations are listed below. We want to thank them for sharing our vision and especially for their patience with the process of creating the book and their tolerance in addressing our comments and edits.

We also wish to thank Wendy Caron of JBS International, Inc. for her assistance in the formatting and editing of the chapters. Her attention to details in the text and references is much appreciated.

We particularly wish to thank Gail Bassin and Jerri Shaw, the CEO and President of JBS International, Inc., for allowing us the time to work on this book. Without their enthusiastic support, the book most likely would have not come to fruition.

Finally, we would like to thank our Springer editor, Khristine Queja. She has patiently worked with us over the past 3 years to develop not only this first book but three others in the series, Preventing Substance Use, Prevention Science in School Settings, and, Preventing Crime and Violence.

The final chapter in this book by Dr. Fabrizio Faggiano and his colleagues Fabrizia Giannotta and Elias Allara provide recommendations for the next advancements in prevention science. This chapter sets out an agenda and a challenge for prevention scientists both those who conduct the research and also those who deliver the prevention interventions. We all want to assure the delivery of evidence-based prevention programming to improve and enhance the lives of ourselves and future generations.

We view this book not as the final word on prevention science but as a starting point that will encourage discourse, discussion and refinement. In line with the quote by Albert Einstein, we hope that this book can help to initiate the creative process of defining and refining Prevention Science.

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Defining Prevention Science

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