

# Preface

Public health systems worldwide have recognised the importance of basing local action on evidence and local intelligence, and appropriate decision-making in healthcare practice requires reliable health intelligence. Our academic and professional experience—nationally and globally—show that due to several challenges faced in the emerging public health paradigm, traditional research may no longer be appropriate for addressing complex public health interventions, and the systems that are required should ensure that public health professionals can access the right knowledge at the right time. We, therefore, believe that providing and utilising appropriate health intelligence (information, data, knowledge, evidence and analysis) by policy planners and decision-makers at local levels will allow the best decisions to be made and will ultimately bring lasting change in people's health and wellbeing status (WHO 2014).

Health intelligence now has clearly defined career ladders in the health sector, ranging from the positions of practitioners to specialists or even consultants; at the time of writing this preface, there are no existing academic texts that would facilitate appropriate transfer of knowledge, skills and aptitude through education and training. It is felt that there is a real need for a textbook on public health intelligence and how evidence and intelligence are used to inform policy at a local, national and international level.

The two distinguishing features of the book are:

- This book will provide some critical understanding of the principles, analytical techniques, toolkits and methods in health intelligence.
- This book will be the first academic text on public health intelligence and will be a significant contribution to translating evidence into policy in the public health community.

Primarily, this book should be essential reading for those involved in public health healthcare, including allied healthcare students, graduate professionals or practitioners, providing them with the opportunity to become confident users of public health evidence.

The book is structured in ways that introduce the topic to students and practitioners and that provide practical examples or discussion tasks of how different forms of evidence have been used in public health or healthcare sciences and to what ends they would be useful. Each chapter will:

- Define the theme in an accessible way
- Illustrate its application and significance in the field
- Identify and explore issues surrounding the theme
- Provide several references for recommended reading

To make readers more informed and interactive, throughout the book we have employed various ‘learner-centred’ approaches, for example, ‘discussion tasks’ and ‘case studies’, as individual and group activities, in the hope that this will provide readers with some idea of what it is and how it should be discussed/carried out. Any remaining errors are, of course, our own.

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## Reference

World Health Organisation (2014). *Providing health intelligence to meet local needs: A practical guide to serving local and urban communities through public health observatories*. Geneva, Switzerland: WHO

Public Health Intelligence

Issues of Measure and Method

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