

Review of:  
Leone, J. (2012). Concepts in male health: Perspectives across the lifespan.

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### **Introduction**

Health promotion and disease prevention sciences among men and boys have only recently been gaining attention among larger, and more influential, research and outreach professionals and organizations. Comprehensive texts on male wellness issues are non-existent at worst and anemically inclusive at best. Exactly what has kept research, academic, and political playmakers from providing appropriate attention to men and boy's health promotion and disease prevention efforts is up for debate among those aforementioned circles. What is important now is that there is indeed an upswing in research and outreach to try and understand males and how we can make them healthier. One such piece, Dr. Jim Leone's *Concepts in Male Health: Perspectives Across the Lifespan*, successfully attempts to provide a comprehensive text for higher education courses aimed at informing health professionals of the issues experienced by men and boys through their lifespan. To the knowledge of this writer, no such attempt has been made before with such depth and breadth of information.

### **Chapter Breakdown and Critique**

Leone organizes the text as one would expect for higher education classroom instruction. Each chapter offers to the reader: learning objectives, an introduction, specific and prevalent health issues, myths and facts, ice-breaker questions for classroom quid pro quo, summaries of the topic/age span, key terms, and discussion questions. The progression of the text across the lifespan (literally) organizes the information so it naturally flows from one chapter to the next.

Each chapter, although varying with content specific to each time period, has interconnecting theses of physical, social, emotional, and behavioral health. There are differences, but such threads are woven to help support appropriate flow of the material.

However, there is freshness to the design. Leone offers the reader a series of vignettes that provide a sense of almost overt subjectivity, which, actually, is very much welcomed. As most texts read akin to stereo instructions, Leone's use of the vignette allows the reader to personally connect to the material. The reader is not barraged by fact-after-fact-after-fact, ad infinitum, perhaps ad nauseum, as they are from the vast majority of traditional textbooks. His approach allows the reader to connect to the material beyond the traditional method of read, memorize, recite, repeat, which is a fossil of the vertical, quasi-dictatorial approach to education and information dissemination. Leone's approach is more horizontal where the words read like our father or friends are speaking to us instead of some distant, faceless academician.

There are some areas of the piece that could be revisited to make it stronger, however. One primary issue is that the chapters unevenly represent age groups. There are 5 chapters devoted to ages 0-12, 2 devoted to ages 13-36, and 4 devoted to ages 36-death. The reader is left wondering why there is an overwhelming focus (nearly half of the text) on infant and child health and the other half spent on the remaining 60-70 or so years of life. The other primary issue, which plays off of the first, is that there is an underrepresentation of major men's health

issues, including prostate and testicular cancers. When one thinks of men's health, prostate cancer, perhaps testicular cancer, and maybe masculinity issues (as it pertains to the stereotyped 'stubborn' male) come to mind, and rightfully so, as these issues are highly prevalent among male populations. Prostate cancer affects hundreds of thousands of men every year, primarily between the ages of 45-70. It is natural to automatically think about prostate health when the notion of men's health is introduced. Granted, heart disease and lung cancer kill more men per annum, however, prostate disease is male-specific, thus lending to its almost de facto representation as *THE* male issue. Leone offers the reader a few pages on the issue. There are very well written and provide great material, but if he would have expanded the section by even 50%, it would have made the piece stronger. Regarding testicular cancer, which is one of, if not the, number one killer of men aged 15-35, there is but a few paragraphs offered to the reader. Again, a slight increase in emphasis would make the piece even more representative of the spectrum of health issues seen throughout the male lifespan.

This writer feels that if Leone intended to move beyond discussing at length stereotypical men's health issues that lie in later stages in life he could have asserted his position is a bit more decisive tone. In other words, if he stated why his text wanted to emphasize a more comprehensive dictation of the issues of men's health beyond 'typical' men's health topics, particularly in the more formative 0-12 year old range, a more robust statement could put the readers at ease. Leone does discuss prostate and testicular cancers, but perhaps not enough credence is lent to the particular health issues considering their overwhelming presence in men's livelihoods.

Leone leaves the reader with a section on efforts to promote men's health. The reader comes to understand that perhaps the tide is turning from

the current state of disaggregated research and outreach efforts into a more cohesive effort among local, state, and federal agencies promoting issues so important to men and boys; welcomed news as the health issues experienced by men and boys seems almost overwhelming at times. One cannot be relieved that such efforts are underway. Leone comprehensively provides information on related organizations and their efforts.

### **Conclusion**

This text is meant to "serve as a textbook for students in class that support male health." (p. xiii) Overall, this text is very successful at achieving what it set out to accomplish. This writer believes Leone is bold in two ways with varying degrees of optimism.

This text is more optimistically bold in the idea that, according to this writer's knowledge, there has not been any such effort to provide a comprehensive effort to disseminate information on health and wellness issues across the male lifespan. An effort of this magnitude twenty years ago perhaps would have not been met with the same open arms as Leone's effort is today. For that, Leone for his pen, and the willing audience for their open eyes and ears, are given kudos for their contribution to promote men's health issues in such a formal, academic fashion.

This text is less optimistically bold in the sense that this is a pioneering piece. Due to the unfortunate low-key and unpopular nature of the topic and the relatively small number of universities willing to offer men's health courses, perhaps this book will not be given the due credit in terms of application, which is most certainly out of the hands of Leone. However, this writer bestows upon Dr. Leone kudos for taking the intimidating first step of producing this product that will no doubt serve the field in a very positive and productive manner.

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