

## Health Communication in the Caribbean and Beyond: A Reader

G Steele, editor

Variations in health literacy among different populations and sub-cultures and the impact on health-seeking behaviours are real concerns for Caribbean public health. Health professionals play a pivotal role in bridging the gaps and efforts to maximize this process must be pursued at all cost. This is why the book 'Health Communication in the Caribbean and Beyond: A Reader', edited by Godfrey A Steele, is such a timely and appropriate publication. It targets interests in training, education and professional application of health communication in a Caribbean context by sharing Caribbean best practices and research experiences.

The book is divided into four sections, allowing for easy references surrounding key issues in health communication. In section 1, four research and teaching experiences are utilized to demonstrate the relevance of 'Medical Communication Skills Education' in the training of undergraduate medical students. Counselling and communications theories from the literature are analysed in the context of cultural nuances among students in the learning environment and the expectations and thinking of potential patients.

Section 2 has two papers discussing practical applications of health communication in different settings and one paper that analyses counselling and psychotherapy theories in light of Caribbean culture surrounding issues of mental health. The implications for 'Helping Professionals' in the third paper provide sound words of caution for those working with Caribbean people locally or in the diaspora.

Section 3, entitled 'Information Use and Behaviour', focusses on experiences with communication strategies utilized in communicating about HIV/AIDS. Some valuable lessons are shared in this section and I would recommend this chapter for those planning media campaigns as it encourages evaluation of media content and highlights the need to explore non-traditional methods of information sharing.

'Campaigns and Practices' is the title for section 4 of the book. It starts with Steele picking up on the Information, Education and Communication (IEC) campaign evaluation started in section 3. The results of how this evaluation influenced policies and procedures is what makes this chapter interesting for me especially since it led to strengthening the inclusion of popular culture in the health communication process. In addition, this chapter provides rich experiences on a range of other issues including the role of faith based organizations in prevention of HIV stigma and creating community settings for health information sharing. Practitioners in the field can benefit from such experiences.

In conclusion, this book has achieved just what it was intended to do; it provokes a lot of thought on how theories and procedures proposed in other cultures often require adaptation to local cultural dynamics if they are to be effective in meeting the needs of Caribbean people. This 'Reader' not only highlights some of the field challenges to be encountered but also proposes guidelines for practice in different helping professions. Such a text can be of value to professionals in medical education and training as well as practitioners in the social and behavioural sciences. The strength of the book is 'Caribbean writers with Caribbean experiences sharing Caribbean perspectives around global health issues'. This is a recommended reader.

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