
What do people eat and who eats what? Food balance sheets, household budget surveys, and individual level studies all provide data on the dietary patterns of individuals. This book makes a critical assessment of these data sources, examining what each can and cannot tell us, and how they should be used. It also has a chapter on health monitoring in relation to diet which relates back to a previous book from the European Office of WHO, Healthy nutrition, which showed us what we in Europe should be eating, and why. Before policies are formed to promote healthy eating, it is necessary to know what we eat already. Both books are intended as a guide to all those who could and should contribute to people's nutritional wellbeing: food producers, manufacturers and retailers, ministry officials, policy makers, and in public positions that entail decision making on food, such as caterers and hospital administrators.

This short book (171 pages) is well produced with good clear print, helpful headings, sensible diagrams and tables, and an attractive front cover. Each chapter is written by experts with practical experience of the topic covered, and includes a good set of references for those who need to follow up in more detail. There are 20 contributors from 11 European countries and yet the English is clear and concise throughout—no doubt a tribute to the editing.

Whether or not this book reaches its target readership it would be a useful introduction to anyone interested in food consumption patterns.

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As a field of enquiry in epidemiology and public health, nutrition has certainly come of age. Although everyone is exposed to nutrients, the difficulties of linking nutritional exposures with disease outcomes perhaps explain the continuing low status of nutrition in the undergraduate medical curriculum. Design concepts in nutritional epidemiology is a text that could be used by medical students, but most of its readers will be postgraduate students of nutrition and epidemiology.

Oxford University Press has now published two major texts that address many of the same questions, with only a short time between them. Comparison will be made, here and no doubt elsewhere, with Willett's Nutritional epidemiology, released in 1990. As the second arrival, this new book faces a greater challenge in the market, although it is a formidable work.

Design concepts gives a general introduction to epidemiology that would escort nutrition students with the capacity for learning quantitative methods to a level where research could, indeed, be conceived and designed. Chapter 1, for example, contains useful appendices on the preparation of research grant applications and questionnaires. Nutrition students may find, however, that the chapters on technical nutritional matters overlap their other books, just as the present reviewer found much common ground between this and the standard epidemiology texts. Yet all epidemiologists would benefit, for example, from the high standard of the chapter on covariate measurement errors.

Chapter 4 (on food consumption) and chapter 5 (on existing nutritional data) will be of greatest interest in Europe. This is not a text for developing countries, although there is basic advice apropos for the survey planner. The description of biochemical markers of nutrient intake covers many of the same topics as the long chapter in Willett's text, but with many different references, attesting to the rapid growth of the literature in nutritional epidemiology. How soon will this field demand its own journal?

Design concepts in nutritional epidemiology has a wider coverage of epidemiological principles than Willett's text. The latter contains three reviews (of vitamin A and lung cancer, dietary fat and breast cancer, and diet and heart disease) in the space saved. Both should be required reading in nutritional epidemiology courses. Design concepts may be preferred in Europe, and by nutritionists learning epidemiology.

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