

BOOK REVIEW

Abdool Karim, SS & Abdool Karim, Q. 2010. (eds). HIV/AIDS in South Africa. 2ND Edition. Cape Town: Cambridge.

D.M. van der Wal, D Litt et Phil

Department of Health Studies

University of South Africa

Corresponding author: vdwaldm@unisa.ac.za

As the title indicates, this book addresses HIV/AIDS in South Africa. The seven subsections of the text cover all aspects of the epidemic as manifested in South Africa since the diagnosis of the first cases in the early 1980s; up to the currently available diagnostic and treatment options, as well as an overview of the social and economic impact of HIV/AIDS in South Africa. The vast field covered by the text is sensibly categorised into seven sections comprising

- the birth of a rapidly growing epidemic
- the virus, the human host and their interactions
- risk factors and prevention strategies
- focal groups for understanding the HIV epidemic
- the impact of AIDS;
- treating HIV and
- what does the future hold?

Thirty four chapters are written by forty authors, all specialists in their different areas of interest relating to HIV/AIDS. Each subsection illustrates HIV/AIDS as a multidimensional phenomenon, as comprehensively as would be allowed in a single publication. The text provides sufficient in-depth information on issues of current concern such as the impact of HIV/AIDS and treatment on specific groups. The text is also not overly verbose. However, by necessity, technical terminology is used, where called for, without being guilty of *jargon*. In this regard the text would serve healthcare practitioners, community health educators and undergraduate students well.

The aesthetic appeal of the text is slightly tarnished by the left only alignment of the text. Although the white space on each page allows for note taking, the overflow of graphics into these spaces further contributes to an unfinished appearance of the text.

The main shortcoming in the text, from an academic point of view, is the lack of pertinent references within the text. The list of references provided at the end of each chapter does not remedy this issue. Further, the dynamic nature of research and development in the field of HIV/AIDS require current references in addition to older ones. Sections of information contained in a text such as Abdool Karim & Abdool Karim (2010) could quickly become outdated. Notwithstanding the vast amount of current information made available on the Internet and other publications on aspects discussed in Abdool Karim & Abdool Karim (2010), the authors, editors and publishers of Abdool Karim & Abdool Karim (2010) could become more involved by utilising the electronic means available to keep the text current. A five year hard copy revision of the text might be improved by publishing an electronic version of the book, with the option for authors to update sections of the book, as it becomes necessary.

Notwithstanding these issues, Abdool Karim & Abdool Karim (2010) is a comprehensive, informative and well written text, suitable for a large contingent of health professionals in South Africa. The editors did an exceptional job of co-ordinating the contents of the text; a text that should appear in all health libraries for caregivers to access.