

SOURCES

Encyclopedia of Health Services Research. Ed. by Ross M. Mullner. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2009. 2 vols. alkaline \$375 (ISBN 978-1-4129-5179-1).

Three cheers for Sage! With the *Encyclopedia of Health Services Research*, they have filled an enormous void in reference tools for this complex, multidisciplinary, and increasingly important field.

Ross M. Mullner, along with two highly experienced health policy researcher associate editors and an impressive editorial board, methodically went about determining the relevant topics for this publication and have succeeded in covering “the study of the accessibility, costs, quality and outcomes of healthcare” (xxix) in this nontechnical, but comprehensive, two-volume work. The contributors include leading experts in the fields of health administration, health economics, medicine, medical sociology, political science, public policy, and public health.

Along with an alphabetical listing of entries with intuitive headings, a detailed readers’ guide is provided and comprises sixteen sections: Access to Care; Accreditation, Associations, Foundations, and Research Organizations; Biographies of Current and Past Leaders; Cost of Care, Economics, Finance, and Payment Mechanisms; Disease, Disability, Health and Health Behavior; Government and International Healthcare Organizations; Health Insurance; Health Professionals and Healthcare Organizations; Health Services Research; Laws, Regulations, and Ethics; Measurement, Data Sources and Coding, and Research Methods; Outcomes of Care; Policy Issues, Healthcare Reform and International Comparisons; Public Health; Quality and Safety of Care; and Special and Vulnerable Groups. The signed entries range from five hundred to three thousand words—fewer for biographies and more for major concepts and topics. Each entry is followed by a further readings list and relevant websites. Entries are cross-referenced. While the encyclopedia primarily covers the United States, health services research in other areas of the world are addressed, although somewhat unevenly. Eastern Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa are each treated in the aggregate while China and Australia each have their own entry. Volume 2 contains a valuable annotated bibliography of core articles and books about selected topics in the field, as well as an appendix of Web resources and a complete index.

While other reference works such as Julie Rovner’s *Health Care Policy and Politics A to Z* (CQ, 2008), Lester Breslow’s *Encyclopedia of Public Health* (Macmillan/Gale, 2002), and Loue and Sajatovic’s *Encyclopedia of Aging and Public Health* (Springer, 2007), cover portions of the *Encyclopedia of Health Services Research* content, none are as comprehensive or thorough. This publication is a unique addition to the field.

It is highly recommended for special libraries in health policy or related fields; academic libraries, particularly those with public policy, public administration, political science or any health-related curricula; and large public libraries.—Joann E. Donatiello, *Population Research Librarian, Donald E. Stokes Library, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey*

Encyclopedia of Medical Decision Making. Ed. by Michael W. Kattan. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2009. 2 vols. alkaline \$375 (ISBN 978-1-4129-5372-6).

The objective of the *Encyclopedia of Medical Decision Making* is to provide a comprehensive introduction and overview of the methodologies, theories, strategies, resources, and techniques used in medical decision making (xxvii). Kattan has met and surpassed his objective in the thorough examination of the many concepts pertaining to medical decision making, ranging from the foundations of decision making to ethical, mathematical, epidemiological, sociological, and economical considerations. All entries are arranged alphabetically by topic; however, there is a reader’s guide at the beginning that categorizes all essays into seven core topic areas. These areas range from “Basis for Making the Decision” to “Psychology Underlying Decision Making.” Each entry includes a list of further reading as well as charts, graphs, tables, formulas, and “see also” references when available.

In addition to the vast topic coverage, this encyclopedia is unique to the literature. The two most comparable resources are Gross’s *Making Medical Decisions* (American College of Physicians, 1999) and Sox and colleagues, *Medical Decision Making* (Butterworth, 1988). Though both focus on medical decision making, neither cover the topic in as much detail as Kattan. Gross discusses medical decision making in general terms with a more informal writing style. Sox and colleagues go into great statistical detail and are more technical; however, the work is dated and not as comprehensive as Kattan’s. In addition to its niche in the medical decision making encyclopedia market, the *Encyclopedia of Medical Decision Making* is also available electronically though Sage Reference Online (<http://sage-e-reference.com/Home.html>).

Though the editor points out several weak areas of the encyclopedia, which include topic selection, some redundancy with material repeated in multiple entries, and not all examples provided in the essays being evidence-based (xxxiv, xxxv), another area of concern is the intended audience. The editor states that the encyclopedia is written for a broad audience that includes physicians, policy makers, and patients (xxxiii); however, the language and the concepts covered in the essays are technical and complex. The writing may be beyond the understanding of someone unfamiliar with the terminology and concepts of decision making. Such entries as “Boolean Algebra and Nodes” and “Expected Value of Sample Information, Net Benefit of Sampling” use many statistical terms and symbols. Though the essay “Statistical Notation” helps define the various statistical symbols and terms, the language and content of the essays are written above the level of a novice to statistics and medical decision making.

This encyclopedia is comprehensive, authoritative, and is of value to any institution that serves physicians, residents, and medical students; however, it is not recommended for consumer health collections.—Maria C. Melssen, *Head of Learning and Information Services, Florida International University, Miami, Florida*