

## Book Review

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**Shikha Dixit & Arun Kumar Sharma (2017). *Psycho-Social Aspects of Health and Illness*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company Pvt. Ltd, Pages: 352, Price: Rs.1350/- (Hard Bound), ISBN: 9789351252764**

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Health is a multidimensional concept that focuses on the comprehensive fitness of an individual. The health of an individual does not remain restricted to only physical aspect rather it also takes into account the psychological and sociological perspective that are related to mental health challenges, health beliefs and health care system. Health psychology is an imperative emerging field that has immensely inspired health care professionals towards broadening their perspective on health related issues. Research in the area of health psychology has drawn considerable attention to the role of psychosocial aspects related to health and illness. As put forth by Spector (2004) 'We learn from our own cultural and ethnic backgrounds how to be healthy, how to recognize illness and how to be ill. Furthermore, the meanings we attach to the notions of health and illness are related to the basic, culture bound values by which we define a given experience and perception' (p. 5). While highlighting the significance of psychosocial understanding of health and illness, Kleinman (1980) states that socially organized response towards illness amounts to an imperative part of the health care system.

In today's world researchers believe that an individual's social systems, lifestyles, personalities and cognitive processes must be included while conceptualizing health and illness. The volume edited by Shikha Dixit and Arun Kumar Sharma presents an interdisciplinary social scientific approach towards health and illness precisely in Indian context. In this volume there are 15 chapters that set the tone for discussions on the core issues related to health initiatives, emerging issues in health policy and planning, health care and social representation of mental health and illness among women, children and defence personnel. All the chapters in the volume follow a particular sequence making it easier for the reader to understand the psychosocial issues involved in health representations.

The present text is divided into four sections: Health Cognitions, Health Care and Health Initiatives, Mental Health and Mental Illness, and Health Challenges. The array of researches present in these sections broadens the horizon of the readers with respect to the understanding of the concept on health and illness from varying perspectives. The first section on Health Cognitions comprises of four chapters that looks at the psychological perspectives of health. The first chapter is an attempt by the authors to understand cancer patient's perceived illness severity and the way it varies from biomedical disease severity. Understanding patient's perceived illness severity on various dimensions suggests a holistic and patient centered approach to cater to the psychosocial needs of patients. The second chapter outlines the way how people from different culture understand health and manages their health related problems. In particular, the authors present a case of physical and mental health problems of women belonging to the Kharwar tribal group of Uttar Pradesh. The third chapter is an empirical study that examines the relationship of illness beliefs and optimism with subjective well-being and post traumatic growth in cervix cancer patients. The health beliefs held by the patients significantly influences their adaptive resources such as hope of recovery and decision about the future course of action (Dalal, 2000). Chapter four provides conceptual discussion pertaining to illness cognition and model of illness representations that serves instrumental for adopting positive health behaviours for developing patient centred health management.