



The People's Health: A Memoir of Public Health and Its Evolution at Harvard

Robin Marantz Henig

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In **The People's Health**, author Robin Marantz Henig brings to life the compelling story of the successes and setbacks of public health. This engaging book documents the expansion of public health from a search for microbes to a global effort to secure a healthful environment--from physician John Snow's breakthrough in cholera prevention in mid-nineteenth-century Britain to the public health crisis emerging today from the war in Bosnia.

Henig explores the multiple perspectives from which public health must be viewed--well illustrated by the medical, behavioral, and social aspects of AIDS. In telling the stories of the wars on malaria, polio, and other diseases, she describes the machinery of public health and highlights the detective work of the early searches for pathogens.

Since mid-century, most disease has related not to epidemics but to personal choices about smoking and eating that can lead to heart disease and cancer. Henig looks at the groundbreaking Framingham Heart Study, running nearly 50 years, from which emerged the concept of risk factors for disease.

The People's Health discusses the link between health and human rights--for example, how legal and cultural practices force many African women into unprotected sex with HIV-infected husbands.

The subtext of **The People's Health** is the contribution of the Harvard School of Public Health, direct descendent of the first professional training program for public health in America, where many of the advances of the past half-century originated.

Throughout the book, Henig highlights individuals, such as Philip Drinker, who invented the iron lung, and Jonas Salk, who developed the polio vaccine. Also included is the story of Jay Winsten, who, as director of Harvard's Center for Health Communication, imported the designated-driver concept from Sweden and persuaded television's largest production companies to weave it into program plots.

A fast-moving overview of humankind's effort to conquer disease and the public health challenges on the horizon, this volume is a "must read" for anyone concerned about public health.

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