

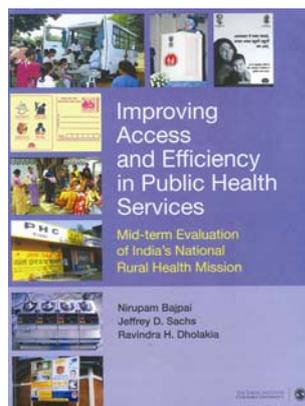
## BOOK REVIEWS

dealt with in detail by the authors (p. 339). Human genetics is moving swiftly from the research laboratory to its application in human diagnostic testing as well as therapy. This has led to the emergence of a number of issues relating to safety, confidentiality and genetic discrimination of human subjects. The article on informed consent in genetic research (p. 361) lucidly brings out the paramount importance of informed consent in human genetics testing and research. The authors present a detailed description of the steps involved in obtaining informed consent. The article will be useful for researchers embarking on human genetics research. Inventions and innovations resulting from research are an important intellectual property of the researcher/institution, and need to be protected from unlawful commercialization. The article on patents (p. 383) dwells on various aspects of patents, right from the definition of a patent to examples of various instances of patent infringement in great detail. The authors have presented famous examples like erythropoietin and polymerase chain reaction patents to emphasize the importance of patenting the innovations.

Overall, the editors have put together an educative collection of articles dealing with varied aspects of human genetics and genomics, ranging from evolutionary genetics to contemporary issues, which will be an interesting read for researchers in this field.

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**Improving Access and Efficiency in Public Health Services: Mid-term Evaluation of India's National Rural Health Mission.** Nirupam Bajpai, Jeffrey D. Sachs and Ravindra H. Dholakia. SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd, B-1/I-1, Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area, Mathura Road, New Delhi 110 044, India and The Earth Institute, Columbia University, 405 Low Library, MC 4335, 535 West 116th Street, New York 10027, USA. 2010. xviii + 117 pp. Price: Rs 695.

The Indian Government spends less than 1% of the GDP on health. The National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), spanning a period of seven years, from 2005–06 to 2011–12, began in April 2005 with the aim of improving public health services while focusing on states having a weak public health infrastructure. NRHM is a Central Government initiative that intends to bridge the north–south divide in healthcare facilities. One of the elements of NRHM is the commitment of the Central Government to increase public spending on health from 0.9% to 2–3% of GDP. Mainstreaming of Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy manpower is one of the supplementary strategies of NRHM for achieving the set goals.

The book under review is a report on the mid-term evaluation of the functioning of NRHM. The health sector in the rural India has been criticized for its inefficiency and the low quality of services, particularly in the northern and central parts of the country. The major sufferers of poor health amenities are eventually the rural women and children. Under the study, field work was carried out in five districts from Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs), who provide basic curative medicines, first aid and preventive care, and participate in healthcare delivery programmes, were the main focus of the study. A trained ASHA is considered to be the most critical element of NRHM.

Indeed, NRHM has helped increase the rate of fully immunized children (except in a few states). It has also helped reduce the infant mortality rate in some states, but the study indicates that this rate is clearly not even close to the targeted rate of decline! As the study claims, NRHM has not achieved the desired impact on health output either. It is worth noting that rural healthcare is in such a bad shape that the usual practice is for the patients to bring their own bed sheets for treatment in community health centres. Can the urban elite even imagine something like this? The study concludes that though this ambitious mission is first of its kind in the country, much more needs to be done.

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