

HIV/AIDS in South Africa 25 Years On

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Leickness C. Simbayi
Editors

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Psychosocial Perspectives

Foreword by Edwin Cameron

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Foreword

AIDS has been one of the defining challenges of our time. On our continent Africa, more so, because its greatest global burden is here, where wealth is least and human systems frailest. And in South Africa most acutely, not just because 5 or 6 million of us are living with HIV and AIDS, but because of the gross political mismanagement of the epidemic, rooted in presidentially instigated AIDS denialism in the early years of this century. Its disabling effects still linger, even as new political purpose is at last bringing order and hope to the epidemic.

No corner of our social effort or investment – from health care to social security, education to the economy, correctional services or the judiciary – escapes AIDS. Amongst the many lessons the epidemic has taught us is that health is only partly the domain of medical science – every aspect of life is subject to, and in turn influences, AIDS.

Hence, no single approach can begin to secure the proper prevention, containment, treatment and care we need. The words “holistic” and “multi-sectoral”, though grievously over-used, have practical meaning: that imagination, cohesion and commitment are what we have to start with. Then we need effective knowledge and systems and resources.

But we also need understanding. To deal effectively with an epidemic that threatens the lives of so many demands insight. And for that, we have to confront controversy – indelicately where necessary. It also requires us to innovate, and to confound convention wisely.

This impressive book will, I hope, help us with all of this. It brings together many of the “usual suspects” – those authoritative experts from our region whose clinical and analytical and academic work has placed them at the global forefront of AIDS.

Their common interest here, reflected through their broad range of collaborators, is in psychosocial approaches to the epidemic. Each writes about a fascinating and important aspect. All do so with a view to increasing our understanding, and thus our capacity to do more.

The contributions are generally of high quality; some are innovative; and most are of real interest. The emphases differ. Across chapters, there are differences of opinion. Good.

This book shows how far we have come over the past quarter-century in moving to greater psychosocial understanding of HIV/AIDS in South Africa. It also tells us how far we still have to go.

What is good is that we now have between the covers of one volume a range of authoritative reviews of what we know – and of what we still need to learn.

The editors collected these chapters to provoke debate. The best compliment you could return would be to read the chapters critically, in a spirit of challenge, response and further inquiry.

So I congratulate them and the authors on this impressive compendium of ideas, data, and challenges. This book is quite a landmark in HIV/AIDS scholarship in South Africa.

If it helps us to think more deeply, and to work more effectively in this still dire epidemic, it will have been worth the contributors' effort, and your investment in buying it.

Edwin Cameron
Justice of the Constitutional Court of South Africa
March 2009

Acknowledgments

The contributors to this volume come from a broad range of disciplines and institutions, both in South Africa and internationally. We have attempted to put together a book that reflects a diversity of psychosocial issues and perspectives involved in approaching the HIV/AIDS epidemic in South Africa. We have tried to be as inclusive as possible in addressing various topics, and of course there remain some areas that we did not have the space to include. This has turned out to be a large volume, and we would like to thank all the contributors for putting together their knowledge and thoughts into this book, for thinking about what has been learnt and still needs to be learnt about HIV/AIDS in South Africa, and for doing so within our deadlines. In some cases, authors had to put up with ongoing emails and some difficult requests from the editorial team. We thank all authors for their contributions, without which this book would not be possible.

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