

## Citation metadata

Author: Andrew Singleton  
Date: Jan. 2003  
From: International Journal of Men's Health(Vol. 2, Issue 1)  
Publisher: Men's Studies Press  
Document Type: Article  
Length: 6,964 words

## Main content

Article Preview :

This paper is a critical analysis of men's health self-help books, focusing on the health care strategies encouraged by this advice literature. It is argued that the genre of men's health self-help overwhelmingly emphasizes the role of the individual in achieving good health and well-being. In presenting this message, men's health self-help reproduces a neo-conservative ideological perspective about public health: good health is primarily an individual concern, and that good health outcomes are largely the product of individual behavior. It is suggested that this emphasis on individuality works best for the genre's target audience of middle-class men, but is of limited use for health-care strategies aimed at achieving better health outcomes for a broader male population.

Key Words: men's physical health, self-help books, health-care strategies, individualism

\*\*\*\*\*

Throughout the 20th century, there have been many popular Western health movements (Starker, 1989), which have made a difference to people's health outcomes. For example, in the 1950s, the founding of the La Leche League signaled a turn away from bottle-feeding back to breast-feeding of infants, and subsequently, new forms of women's empowerment in the face of male medical dominance. Beginning in the 1960s, complementary and alternative medicine gained increased public support, and practices such as naturopathy, homoeopathy, and acupuncture have become an accepted part of many people's health regimen.

Fueled in part by concerns about men's higher rates of morbidity and mortality compared to women, the men's health movement has flourished in recent years in Europe, the United States, and Australia. This movement manifests itself in many ways: conferences have been organized by stakeholders to analyze and discuss men's health issues, scholarly explanations have been offered to account for men's poor health outcomes, and dedicated men's health services have been established by health-care providers. At this point in time, it is not yet clear what impact the men's health movement has had on men's health outcomes, especially those men with the poorest health.

In his book *Oracle at the Supermarket*, Starker (1989) observes that popular health movements of any kind are always supported by self-help literature. The burgeoning concern with men's health is no different. A visit to the local bookstore or on-line bookseller reveals an ever-increasing range of self-help books that present a total program for improving a man's health (as opposed to books covering just one area, like diet). In the first instance, these books offer practical advice for men in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of male health issues like testicular cancer and erectile dysfunction. Other areas of "body maintenance" (Saltonstall, 1993) also come under consideration, from general health problems, to lifestyle issues, fitness programs, and even personal grooming. These books share similarities with popular magazines like *Men's Health* and *Men's Fitness*, both of which dispense accessible health and lifestyle advice to the mass market. Unlike the magazines, however, men's health self-help books offer the consumer an all-in-one guidebook covering the major areas of men's health and thus ought to be viewed as a kind of do-it-yourself "comprehensive health promotion..."

[Access from your library](#)

This is a preview. Get the full text through your school or public library.

## Source Citation

### Source Citation

Singleton, Andrew. "Men's bodies, men's selves': men's health self-help books and the promotion of health care." *International Journal of Men's Health*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2003, p. 57+. Accessed 13 Nov. 2020.

**Gale Document Number:** GALE|A106327748

# Explore

This is a preview. Get the full text through your school or public library.

[Access from your library](#)

## Footer

- [About](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Terms of Use](#)
- [Privacy Policy](#)
- [Accessibility](#)