

A HISTORY *of* PUBLIC HEALTH: *From PAST to PRESENT*

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40312-1

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Cover and Title Page Image: © DEA/A. DAGLI ORTI/Contributor/
De Agostini/De Agostini Editorial/Getty Images
Printing and Binding: McNaughton & Gunn

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Carney, Jan K., author.

Title: A history of public health : from past to present / Jan Kirk Carney, MD, MPH Associate Dean for Public Health and Health Policy, Professor of Medicine, Larner College of Medicine at the University of Vermont Burlington, VT.

Description: First edition. | Burlington, Massachusetts : Jones & Bartlett Learning, [2023] | Includes bibliographical references and index. |

Summary: "This textbook is a history of public health focusing on key moments, discoveries, events, and people - to tell stories important to public health history. The idea is that a topic, theme, or event is the basis for a description (narrative or story) about the important historical event, discovery, awakening, etc. to best engage the reader. Research sources include primary sources from newspapers of the time, government documents (where available) and currently-written textbooks and papers or journal articles about public health and medicine. Illustrations have been chosen and utilized to depict important visual aspects of the event or era to complement the narratives. In addition, the importance of each aspect of public health history is linked to its relevance to public health today"— Provided by publisher.

Identifiers: LCCN 2021034483 | ISBN 9781284111774 (paperback)

Subjects: LCSH: Public health—History. | BISAC: MEDICAL / Public Health

Classification: LCC RA424 .C27 2023 | DDC 614.4—dc23

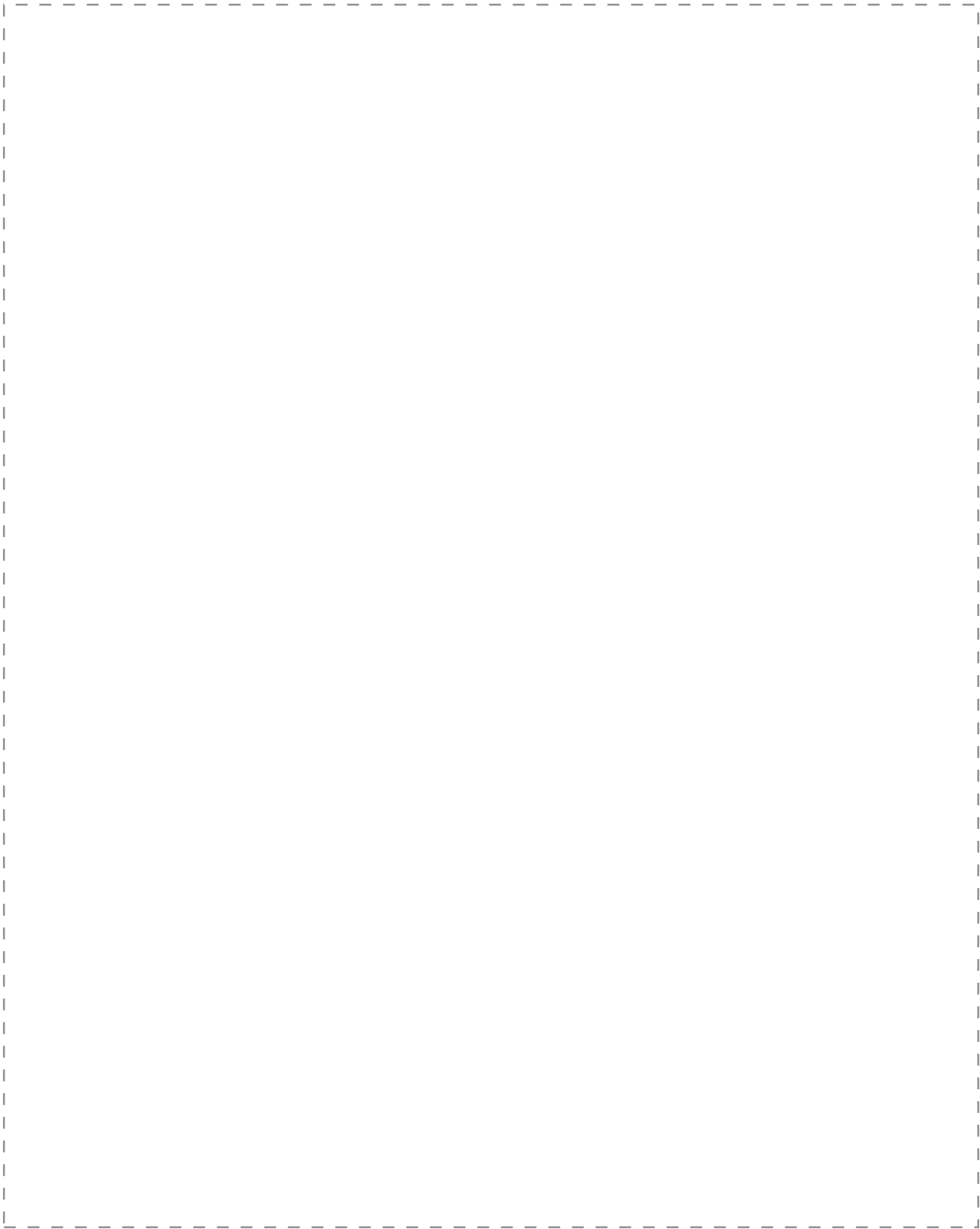
LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021034483>

6048

Printed in the United States of America

26 25 24 23 22 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

For Mom





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Preface

As I write this book, we live in a global pandemic of disruption, disease, and death, but vaccine hopes now brighten our horizons. Public health has never been more important. In the United States, a history of systemic racism and racial injustice underlie vast health inequities and pandemic chasms. Though tempting to look backward, we must look forward, collectively pledging to strengthen public health systems, prevention and preparedness, health care connections, and social conditions. Our struggles against COVID-19 give us a glimpse of all that is possible in science and public health, with the development and distribution of safe and effective vaccines carving a path forward.

From infectious diseases and past pandemics to environmental threats and occupational illness, social, cultural, and political factors are interwoven with health, forming the backdrop for society's responses to new challenges and enduring threats. Public health history is filled with curiosity, courage, and perseverance to face and question conventional thinking.

The textbook uses a structured format to study public health from antiquity to the present time. Starting with an introduction, defining moments in public health history

are stories illustrating people, principles, and challenges. These stories are followed by a discussion of history's relevance to contemporary practice. Suggestions for additional study, discussion questions, and references complete each chapter.

History gives us a sense of perspective and of proportion. Looking at public health over decades and centuries, we see health issues in the context of longer events. For example, we can see the pendulum of history swinging back from a sanitary awakening of poor health's social roots to challenges we face in the present time.

Students, health care workers, public health professionals, researchers, teachers, advocates, policymakers, and citizens are all needed to improve public health. Public health's history is relevant to our complex, challenging, enduring, and global issues today. The most important lessons from our history provide optimism: that public health has, can, and will accomplish extraordinary things—together—to improve people's health and lives.

—Jan Kirk Carney





About the Author

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