

Ninth Edition

# CONSUMER HEALTH

A Guide to Intelligent  
Decisions

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## CONSUMER HEALTH: A GUIDE TO INTELLIGENT DECISIONS, NINTH EDITION

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Dr. Baratz has worked for more than 25 years in dental and medical practice for private, public, and government entities, including the Department of Veterans Affairs, The Daughters of Charity, and Beth Israel Hospital in Boston. He has also worked for the Agency for International Development. Currently he is President and Medical Director of South Shore Health Care in Braintree, Massachusetts, where he practices internal and occupational medicine. He has also served as NCAHF President; a scientific advisor to ACSH; and President of International Medical Consultation Services, Inc., of Newton, Massachusetts. In 1992, the American Dental Association gave him a Presidential Citation for his work in advancing oral public health. He has been listed in *Who’s Who in America*, *Who’s Who in the World*, and *Who’s Who in Science and Engineering*.

## To the Reader

More is known today about achieving and maintaining good health than ever before. Life expectancy is at an all-time high, and although there is still much room for improvement, health-related accomplishments have exceeded the fondest dreams of past visionaries.

This progress has been partly due to a safer environment that includes cleaner water, safer food, and better living space. Yet we hear plenty of news about the environment that concerns us. Preventive and therapeutic medical care have advanced tremendously, yet we worry about the risks associated with immunization, cancer therapies, prescription drugs, surgery, and many other methods of treatment. How can we resolve our concerns and reap the benefits of modern scientific discoveries? The key is to become well-informed.

The challenges involved are enormous. The health marketplace—the world of commercial activity for health-related products and services—is complex and dynamic. The Internet offers vast amounts of information, but much of it is not trustworthy. Health concerns can be overwhelming, especially for people confronted with medical crises. Quackery is more pervasive and far trickier than most people realize. (As noted by the late James Harvey Young, Ph.D., “Quacks never sleep.”)

Health-care costs continue to rise despite numerous reform efforts. The rapidly growing older adult population faces a bewildering array of choices and obstacles for obtaining and paying for appropriate health care. It can also be difficult to determine what health care actually costs and to obtain the best prices. In addition, many people lack access to adequate health care because of cultural, transportation, language, and economic barriers.

Government and private agencies protect consumer rights in some ways but not others. The health-care industry is accountable to consumers to some extent, but quality is often elusive and abuses persist. Some scams are even facilitated by legislation and government policies.

Consumer advocacy calls for justice and fair play in the marketplace. Yet many self-appointed “consumer advocates” do not act in the public’s interest. Although some are sincere and make a contribution, others engage in irrational business bashing or act from motives of personal aggrandizement. Some business trade associations even pose as “consumer groups” and seek self-serving legislation.

*Consumer Health* offers a panoramic view of the health marketplace. It explains and supports the scientific methods that are essential for validating claims about how products and services affect health. It can help you to:

- Understand how medical facts are determined and where to get appropriate information and advice
- Avoid wasting money on unnecessary, ineffective, or unsafe products and services
- Take care of yourself and minimize your need to spend money on health products and services
- Choose appropriate health products and services to meet your needs
- Get the most value out of your health dollars
- Optimize benefits from encounters with health-care providers and facilities while minimizing the potential for harm
- Assert and protect your rights
- Set reasonable expectations for what health care can do
- Evaluate how political issues affect access to health-related innovations and accountability of marketers

The key to intelligent decision-making is to use relevant and accurate sources of information. *Consumer Health* is both an introductory text and a reference book on the opportunities and pitfalls of the health marketplace. The various chapters offer hundreds of practical tips; the Appendix provides a comprehensive list of trustworthy sources. You will get the most out of the book by using the detailed Index to search for information and the Glossary for definitions of terms that might be unfamiliar.

We also operate many Web sites that can supplement your coursework. Consumer Health Sourcebook ([www.chsourcebook.com](http://www.chsourcebook.com)) provides hyperlinks to dependable online sources. It also links to *Consumer Health Digest*, a free weekly e-mail report of relevant news. Internet Health Pilot ([www.ihealthpilot.org](http://www.ihealthpilot.org)) is a gateway to additional trustworthy information. Quackwatch ([www.quackwatch.org](http://www.quackwatch.org)) and its many subsidiary sites provide comprehensive articles about quackery, health fraud, and consumer health strategy. All of these sites are accessible free of charge. Visiting them is a good way to enhance your learning experience.

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## Preface for Instructors

As have previous editions, this ninth edition of *Consumer Health* emphasizes the opportunities and pitfalls in the health marketplace and aims to help students protect their health and their pocketbook.

### Goal for This Revision

*The book's fundamental purpose is to provide trustworthy information and guidelines to enable people to select health products and services intelligently.* This edition culminates our review of thousands of books, journal articles, Web sites, agency reports, and feature stories, as well as our own original investigations and critiques. Readers will find the information useful in applying the *caveat emptor* (let the buyer beware) concept to the health marketplace.

The underlying principles of consumer protection were identified in the Consumer Bill of Rights promulgated by President John F. Kennedy and have guided the development of this textbook. President Kennedy declared that consumers have the right to purchase safe products and services, to be correctly informed, to freely choose products and services, and to be heard by the government and others when injustices occur. We strongly support consumer awareness and efforts to assert and protect these rights.

### Intended Audience

*Consumer Health* has been designed as a sole required textbook for consumer health courses. Selected chapters of the book (see “Publisher’s Notice” box) can also be useful as required or supplemental readings for other courses in health education; community health; public health; family and consumer sciences; consumer education; health psychology; medical sociology; human ecology; and social welfare. School districts will find *Consumer Health* useful as a reference for teachers and students as well as an aid in curriculum development. Professional health-care providers can use this text to prepare for public presentations and can make it available in their offices for perusal by clients.

### Timeliness of References

Every topic in this book has been carefully researched. In most cases, the more than 1500 cited references

represent the latest authoritative information we could locate. Many more systematic reviews and meta-analyses have been cited in this edition than in previous editions. Some references may seem outdated. However, unless otherwise stated, we believe these still reflect the current marketplace. References more than 10 years old are included for historical reasons or because they provide insights or document the source of well-articulated quotations that are still timely. Some reports published long ago are the only ones available that address important concepts.

Chapter 1 provides information on how to read citations and locate the references cited in the text. Those that

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may be especially useful for students seeking additional information are listed with boldface numbers. When citing material on Web sites, we report the publication date when the site identifies it. When no date is posted, we report when we last accessed the page.

### Internet Integration

Another important feature of this edition is its integration with our Consumer Health Sourcebook Web site ([www.chsourcebook.com](http://www.chsourcebook.com)). The “References” section of this site provides links to many full-text articles and to abstracts of most of the journal articles. Suggestions for course objectives, teaching/learning activities, a sample course outline, and links to hundreds of organizations that provide trustworthy information are also posted.

We encourage students and instructors to subscribe to *Consumer Health Digest*, a free weekly e-mail newsletter edited by Dr. Barrett with help from Dr. London. (To subscribe, see [www.ncahf.org/digest/chd.html](http://www.ncahf.org/digest/chd.html).)

At the publisher’s Web site ([www.mhhe.com/barrett9e](http://www.mhhe.com/barrett9e)), instructors will find sample test questions and PowerPoint presentations to use with the book.

### Organization

As in the eighth edition, the text is broadly divided into six parts:

I. *Dynamics of the Health Marketplace* focuses on past and present problems. After defining the major consumer health issues, it discusses how the scientific method is used to determine medical truths, how consumers can separate fact from fiction, how frauds and quackery can be identified, and how advertising and other marketing activities influence consumer decisions.

II. *Health-Care Approaches* covers basic medical care and the services of many types of practitioners and facilities.

III. *Nutrition and Fitness* integrates what consumers need to know about the extremely important topics of nutrition, weight control, and exercise. Its chapters provide the necessary tools to distinguish science-based methods from fads, fallacies, and scams.

IV. *Personal Health Concerns* provides a guide to preventing and managing health problems, including several in which self-care is very important. Separate chapters cover cardiovascular disease and cancer with an emphasis on the choices consumers face.

V. *Other Products and Services* covers a myriad of other subjects that affect most, if not all, consumers. These include drug products, skin care and image enhancement, contraceptive methods, vision and hearing

aids, other devices, death-related services, and health-care facilities.

VI. *Protection of the Consumer* focuses on legal and economic issues involved in protecting consumers. These include health insurance, health-care financing, consumer-protection laws and agencies, and strategies for intelligent consumers.

### Features and New Material

All features from the eighth edition have been retained. Many chapters contain vignettes (“Personal Glimpses”) to stimulate reader interest and “Consumer Tip” and “Consumer Insight” boxes that emphasize key points. Many checklists and “It’s Your Decision” boxes reflect “real-life” decisions that readers may face. The “Key Concepts” box at the beginning of each chapter states what we believe are the most important lessons to be learned from the chapter material. Extensive searches of the scientific literature, court documents, and other relevant reports over an 18-month period have provided information to update the contents of this edition.

- Chapter 1 (*Consumer Health Issues*) introduces the important issues facing consumers in today’s marketplace. New material about cognitive bias explains how distortions of thinking can lead to inaccurate conclusions and faulty judgment.
- Chapter 2 (*Separating Fact from Fiction*) describes how the scientific community strives to determine what is factual and how consumers face an often bewildering array of information that can be unbalanced, inaccurate, and even fraudulent.
- Chapter 3 (*Frauds and Quackery*) explains why people are vulnerable and tells how to avoid quack practices. New material notes how loss of faith in many of our once-trusted institutions has made quack claims seem more credible.
- Chapter 4 (*Advertising and Other Promotional Activities*) describes how sellers market their wares and notes how the multilevel marketing industry thwarted a proposed Federal Trade Commission rule intended to curb its misleading practices.
- Chapter 5 (*Science-Based Health Care*) describes the training and professional activities of physicians and many ancillary providers. It also incorporates U.S. Preventive Services Task Force’s latest conclusions about screening tests, including its skepticism about routine PSA testing.
- Chapter 6 (*Mental and Behavioral Help*) provides a comprehensive guide to mental help and notes that psychiatrists are shifting away from psychotherapy. The section on questionable practices and practitioners has been expanded and cautions against the use of poorly trained “life coaches.”
- Chapter 7 (*Dental Care*) provides a comprehensive dental guide and warns against the increasing use of questionable

screening devices and expensive cosmetic dental procedures intended to create a “perfect bite.”

- Chapter 8 (*The “CAM” Movement*) describes a multitude of theories and practices that remain unsubstantiated and lack a scientifically plausible rationale. It also notes the failure of accrediting agencies to control the spread of unscientific teachings in professional schools (including medical schools).
- Chapter 9 (*A Close Look at Chiropractic*) spotlights the influence of chiropractic on the consumer health marketplace and summarizes the latest research on spinal manipulation.
- Chapter 10 (*Basic Nutrition Concepts*) incorporates the latest Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the USDA Food Guidance System (Choose MyPlate) and tells where to get trustworthy nutrition information and advice.
- Chapter 11 (*Nutrition Fads, Fallacies, and Scams*) includes up-to-date evaluations of dietary supplement products and herbal products and background material on promoters of nutritional misinformation.
- Chapter 12 (*Weight Control*) notes the alarming increase of obesity in the United States and discusses appropriate and inappropriate weight-control measures.
- Chapter 13 (*Fitness Concepts, Products, and Services*) reviews the fundamental concepts typically addressed in personal health courses, but also includes important details about practitioners, information resources, products, services, popular misconceptions, and scams.
- Chapter 14 (*Personal Health and Safety*), which is a new chapter, focuses on health promotion, injury prevention, risk perception, self-care, and the management of asthma, diabetes, high blood pressure, and other chronic conditions. It also notes how information from the Internet and elsewhere can help or undermine prudent behavior. A new section warns against the widely circulating myths that undermine public health efforts.
- Chapter 15 (*Cardiovascular Disease*) contains new and updated information about risk factors for coronary heart disease and stroke and provides guidelines for reducing the risks.
- Chapter 16 (*Cancer*) covers cancer causation, prevention, diagnosis, and prognosis and contrasts science-based and dubious treatments. The new topics include vaccination against the human papilloma virus (HPV) and dubious information sources.
- Chapter 17 (*Drug Products*) includes new information about commonly used nonprescription (over-the-counter) drugs and how to save money on drug costs.
- Chapter 18 (*Skin Care and Image Enhancement*) covers a wide variety of topics related to skin care plus new material about image-enhancement schemes and frauds.
- Chapter 19 (*Sexual and Reproductive Health*) covers products and services related to sexual and reproductive functions. It includes new and updated information about birth control, birthing options, and hormone-replacement therapy, and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases.
- Chapter 20 (*Health Devices*) contains updated information about device regulation and expanded coverage of questionable devices that have been flooding the health marketplace. New topics include spinal decompression machines, “detoxification” devices, and alleged performance enhancing bracelets.
- Chapter 21 (*Coping with Death*) provides current information on advance directives and organ donation and cautions about stem-cell clinics and “biologic age” testing.
- Chapter 22 (*Health-Care Facilities*) notes how the delivery of health-care services is changing and describes the salient features of various options. It also provides advice on how to choose among the various alternatives.
- Chapter 23 (*Health Insurance*) describes the basic types and features of health insurance and outlines the major provisions of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.
- Chapter 24 (*Health-Care Financing*) provides the latest available statistics on national health expenditures, states why insurance reform has been desperately needed, and describes the decades-long struggle to control costs and increase access to medical care.
- Chapter 25 (*Consumer Laws, Agencies, and Strategies*) details the regulatory and educational activities of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the FTC; describes physician regulation; and indicates what consumers can do to help improve the health marketplace.
- The *Appendix* provides comprehensive lists of agencies and organizations that offer trustworthy information. The Consumer Health Sourcebook Web site links to most of them.
- The *Glossary* clarifies important jargon used in the book and defines other terms of interest to health consumers.

### Acknowledgments

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