This book is a very impressive text. Its release represents an important and timely step in providing guidance, and a framework, for the exploration of issues surrounding global environmental change. One of the most striking aspects of the book is its extensive list of contributors. These, along with the editors, Pim Martens and Anthony McMichael (a formidable team who have extensive expertise in global assessment, human health, population health and global environmental change), mean that this book contains contributions from an extensive range of international professionals.

These professionals represent disciplines spanning epidemiology and population health, public health, medicine, hygiene and tropical medicine, ecology and hydrology, global climate change, occupational and environmental health, integrative studies, applied science, veterinary medicine, disease control and vector biology, ecosystem, international health and environmental sciences, with the contributors representing universities and research organisations from the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Italy, the Netherlands, and New Zealand. This not only gives you the impression that this is a very significant text, but gives one a sense of unity in addressing the issues of climate change. This, in itself, encourages you to read further.

The early chapters of the book set the scene for understanding and appreciating the complexities of the issues surrounding climate change. The chapters introduce the concepts, challenges and importance of research, particularly the scientific uncertainties that exist with its current application to health and global change policies. This is achieved through the consideration of topics such as the risks to health through global change, the historical connections between climate, medical and human health, and the contribution of global environmental factors to ill health.

These chapters provide an excellent overview of the combination of the historical epidemiological approaches to health, drawing upon the range of disciplines that contribute to the investigation and improvement of health outcomes, while addressing the impact of the emerging problems caused by the overloading of the earth’s capacity by humankind. These chapters are informative, comprehensive and serve as good reference material for understanding the general relationship between health and global change. Diagrammatic representations of concepts are provided, which are good tools in supporting and illustrating the various concepts. At the same time, the topics provide a good basis for the subsequent chapters, which explore differing approaches to research and their application to the investigation of climate change.

These chapters begin with an introduction that assists the reader in obtaining a clear (and easily read) understanding of the concepts surrounding the research paradigm, whilst keeping in context with the overall text. This is important, and advantageous for the reader, since it immediately provides an understanding of the methodological approaches being explored and the particular relevance to the investigation of health and global change.
The methodological approaches explored include the application of complex interactions, modelling, epidemiological and impact assessment, analogues, remote sensing, geographical information systems, and spatial analysis, to assessing the impacts on health due to global change. As the individual chapters progress, the reader is taken through the various approaches in a more detailed manner, again with the support of illustrations, tables and diagrams, together with examples of the use of the various models on the detection of health impacts such as vector borne diseases, food and water borne diseases and infectious diseases (such as HIV/AIDS). The extensive use of these illustrative materials is advantageous.

These chapters are particularly beneficial for those considering undertaking research, or for understanding more broadly the implications associated with attempting to provide estimates of health impacts, particularly when the decisions involve the development, application or communication of policy in the area of global change.

The text concludes with a chapter titled ‘Dealing with scientific uncertainty’. This valuable chapter explores the issues surrounding the development of scientific policy and building public trust. It also highlights the need to take into account the changing world in which we live and the future role of exact science. It makes for insightful reading.

Overall, the book provides an important contribution to addressing the complex and uncertain area of environmental change, climate and health. It is particularly beneficial to individuals and organisations that are attempting to build a greater understanding of the broader implications associated with providing estimates of health impacts. In addition, the text provides an appreciation of the challenges that need to be addressed in order to do this, and the tools required to enable us to move forward in the protection and preservation of our world. It is a well written, well referenced text that represents a significant and valuable resource for academics, policy makers, environmental health researchers, and scientists.

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