This book begins by introducing us to patients in two general-practice waiting rooms. In an Australian general-practice seven patients are waiting to see doctors. In a New Zealand general-practice waiting room are two patients. The healthcare needs of each patient are outlined.

Of these patients and their circumstances, the editors and specialist chapter-authors ask a series of questions. What is life like for each? How might social role, economic status, and quality of social support impact on their lived experience of illness and injury? To what extent might psychosocial variables impact on the biomedical outcome of each? How might biomedical problems impact on psychosocial variables? What might be the emotional experience of each, their perception of stress, likely resilience, and potential for achieving quality of life despite their current medical variables? What factors might change their emotional experience? What will influence their psychological coping? What might be the cultural and spiritual resources or needs of each? How might health practitioners and the health system more generally respond to their biopsychosocial, cultural, and spiritual needs? To what extent, and how, could presenting problems have been prevented? How can positive attitudes to health and living be promoted?

To encourage health professionals to view a patient in his or her broad context, as a person, and as a person in a family, a cultural group, and in a society, with advantages to patient and clinician, Jennifer Fitzgerald and Gerard J Byrne have brought together experts in medicine, psychology, social work, pastoral theology, and social science. Following a section in which the conceptual foundations of a biopsychosocial approach to healthcare are outlined, chapters on individual differences and developmental processes, relationships, the social determinants of health, existential and ethical issues, and prevention and promotion are offered. In each chapter, to illustrate and personalise key points, authors refer to the patients in the waiting rooms.

Jennifer Fitzgerald, clinical psychologist in private-practice, Brisbane, and Clinical Lead Educator, School of Medicine, University of Queensland.

Gerard J Byrne, Professor and Head, Academic Discipline of Psychiatry, School of Medicine, University of Queensland, and Director, Older Person's Mental Health Service, Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital.