Synthesis of evidence related to risk is the primary focus of this volume. In the context of informing decisions in health care, risk refers to a deleterious or adverse outcome, primarily from ‘everyday’ or inadvertent exposure to a variable or risk factor. In some cases the ‘risk’ may arise from a treatment administered during the course of patient care also. Synthesis of this type of evidence is increasing in importance and relevance; evidenced by the increasing number of systematic reviews and meta-analyses appearing in publication.

Information about risks, even if they appear only minimal, are of great interest to the general public and can have a marked impact on public health. Research, investigation and critical analysis across this important field of inquiry has the potential to better inform all of us, health care professionals, policy makers or lay persons, about the decisions we make in our day to day lives and the impact those decisions may have on our health both now and in our future.