

Public Health Nutrition

„Il faut manger pour vivre et non pas vivre pour manger.”

„L'Avare”, Molière

Abraham Maslow (1908 – 1970) has set up a hierarchy of five levels of basic needs. Of those that are considered to be basic physiological needs hunger, thirst as well as bodily comforts are considered to be the most important. Physiological needs are the strongest needs because if a person were deprived on all needs it is these physiological needs that would take the highest priority.

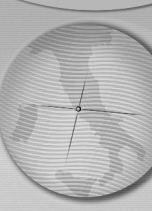
As food is characterized as a basic need, we should have a special view on our daily food and our handling of it. Most people do not act careful with their daily intake of food. In the last decades, the increases of nutrition-associated diseases such as overweight and obesity and on the other hand underweight have been recorded. From a life-span approach, the problem has its offset point in the early age of development, namely in children and adolescents. Malnutrition, overweight and obesity limit children's personal quality of life in terms of unhappiness with their own body, opposition or even rejection in peer group communication and general difficulties in day-to-day social interaction. A close connection between physical stature and the development of a negative self-concept and a low self-esteem is postulated. Food as an essential motivating force for the further development of the whole personality should be not longer a minor topic of daily life. It should be a central part in research as well as intervention strategies, to achieve healthy societies with healthy people. Further development of the individual should be focused upon. For that reason Public Health Nutrition involves all decision-makers for the development and the achievement of sustainable strategies with respect to sensitive target groups such as parents and their infants, children and adolescents, as well as adults and the elderly. Thus, specific intervention strategies can be implemented.

Papers in this issue

The papers in this issue mostly focus on nutrition in childhood. The target groups for the interventions presented and the research projects were predominantly children of primary and secondary schools as well as their parents and other responsible adults.

The first paper of **Hassel and Keimer, Bremen, Germany**, focuses on target group's interest within health education programmes. The authors present with their manuscript **“Parent involvement when developing health education programmes”** (1) how to get a better understanding of what parents and nurses or even teachers want, (2) how to strengthen the point that their method is one way to involve the target groups and to increase the acceptance of health education programmes and, (3) how to describe that focus group discussions are a useful tool to identify the opinions of the target group. Finally results from different focus group dialogues with pedagogues and parents will be discussed and conclusions for health education programmes relevant to all key players involved will be identified.

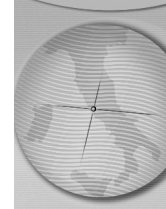
The second article from **Mandal et al., Midnapore, West Bengal, India**, presents in an original paper a serious public health nutrition problem: **“Undernutrition among Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme Children aged 2-6 years of Arambag, Hooghly District, West Bengal, India”**. The aim of the study was to rate the underweight and wasting among 2-6 year old rural children of Bengalee



ethnicity. A total of 1.012 2-6 year old children were observed. As a main result, boys were significantly heavier than girls at ages 2-4 years; they were significantly taller at ages 2 and 4. Significant age differences existed in mean height and weight in both sexes. The authors conclude that the nutritional status of the subjects was unsatisfactory indicating a major public health problem. There is scope for better improvement in the way of enhanced supplementary nutrition.

The next two papers are dealing with nutritional aspects and lifestyle determinants from primary school children. The first one, from **Arpesella et al., Pavia, Venice, and Milan, Italy**, considers **“Obesity nutritional aspects and lifestyle from a survey on a sample of primary school pupils in the Pavia Province (North Italy)”**. In a cross-sectional study children were classified by the Body Mass Index, and a face-to-face questionnaire about children’s use of time was administered. A multiple logistic regression analysis has been applied in order to identify risks or preventive health factors linked to physical activity and eating habits. 12.6% of the children were obese and 26.3% overweight, with the percentage of obesity nearly double in those who do not practice organized sports activities at least once a week, in those who don’t have breakfast in the morning and in those who don’t spend their free time in movement games. The life styles that entail obesity risks are significantly linked both to eating habits and to physical activity: living in middle- and small-sized towns and not having breakfast before going to school emerge as risk factors, while practicing movement games in the free time after school appears to be a protecting factor. **Wildhalm et al., Vienna, Austria and Verona, Italy**, presents in an original paper results from a school based intervention program for the promotion of a healthy lifestyle in Austrian youth. **“Obesity intervention on healthy lifestyle in childhood: Results of PRESTO (PrEvention STudy of Obesity) STUDY”** deals with the importance of school-oriented intervention programmes. In the intervention project medical examinations were performed and participants’ knowledge on good nutrition and dietary habits had been collected. Twelve nutrition sessions, one hour per week in each class, were conducted. Teachers were advised to discuss about health issues in their classes and specifically exercise physiologists were informed about how to integrate appropriate exercises into their lessons. PRESTO-classes showed significant knowledge on nutrition, subjects consumed less unhealthy foods. These effects could be observed in a short term (14 weeks) and in a follow up (10 months). The authors close with the statement that school-oriented intervention programs/studies, like PRESTO, are a potential way to show a positive effect on nutrition, physical activity and healthy behaviours in youth, especially if carried out on a long-term basis.

The last paper in this issue from **Hillger et al., Dresden, Germany**, deals with school-oriented intervention in the secondary level. Nutrition related topics were developed, which were implemented in curricula of secondary schools in Saxony, Germany, during their reorganisations. **“Nutrition sciences as part of school education on secondary level”** presents an overview about that have been created for teachers and a preview for further steps. The overall aim of the was to make children and adolescents more sensitive to nutrition related topics in their daily life. For the subject economics-technology-household exemplary within the framework of Saxon curricula were created for secondary schools, grade eight to ten. Furthermore, for project days and different kinds of courses, were prepared for nutrition related topics. Teachers as well as pupils appreciated the complex and materials on scientific basis. The consulted subject teachers emphasise that the can be regarded as a fundamental preparation for their further work. If necessary they need to be adapted to the teacher’s ideas and special circumstances in school.



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