EDITÖRE MEKTUP / LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Necessity to urgently respond to the challenge of malnutrition: World Health Organization

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To the Editor,

The global public health concern of malnutrition comprises of various forms such as under-nutrition, insufficient vitamin/mineral intake, overweight, and resulting diet-related lifestyle disorders1-2. The available global estimates suggest that close to 2 billion adults are overweight, while more than 460 million adults are underweight1. Further, in excess of 40% of death in the under-five year age group is associated with under-nutrition, of which a significant proportion is reported from developing nations1,3. It is important to realize that the clinical, socioeconomic, and developmental consequences of malnutrition are grave and long-lasting for the individual, their families, local community, and even for the nations1-3.

In general, population groups like women, children and adolescents have the maximum risk of malnutrition, and the presence of poverty significantly enhances the risk further1,4. At the same time, it augments the direct & indirect medical expenses, decreases productivity, and interferes with the financial growth of the nation1. Although, the estimates on global malnutrition depict a slight reduction in the current estimates, nevertheless it is quite shocking that 1 out of 3 individuals suffer from one or the other form of malnutrition worldwide1. Further, a decline in only the rates of stunting has been achieved, while an increase in the prevalence of all other forms of malnutrition has been observed1,4. As a matter of fact, for the first time nutrition has attracted so much priority on the global political level1. Further, based on the current trends it has been predicted that if we don’t change our approach or expand the reach of services, the global leaders will not be able to attain the set targets for the year 2025 and 20301. Moreover, owing to the impact of impaired nutrition on the multiple dimensions of life and its preponderance to affect the already vulnerable population groups, the period from 2016 to 2025 has been declared as the Decade of Action on Nutrition1,4. This focuses on establishing systems for provision of healthy diets, delivering nutrition-related education to all, ensuring alignment of health system with the nutrition needs, introducing reforms in the trade & investment policies to upscale nutrition, enabling present of a safe environment to warrant nutrition at all ages, and ensuring governance & accountability at all levels3,4.

It is important to acknowledge that even though the underlying issues are complex, the probable solutions for each one of them are same1. Also, it is not just about the quantity of food which is provided, but we should even give the same attention to the quality aspect1. Further, the preparation from our side should start right from an early age taking into account the issues of maternal nutrition, breastfeeding practices, childhood & adolescent dietary practices1,3.

To conclude, absence of a healthy diet is the crucial risk factor for the development of malnutrition & many other diseases. In order to bridge the existing gap between the need and the current practice of nutrition, it is necessary to implement an effective, sustainable, and structured nutrition program at the country level4.
gaps, and ensure that the world is free from all forms of malnutrition, many nations have started taking action, but still a lot needs to be done.

REFERENCES


