



EDİTÖRE MEKTUP / LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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

Dünya Sağlık Örgütü yetersiz beslenme konusu üzerinde acilen durmalıdır

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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 disorders^{1,2}. 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 nations^{1,3}. 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 further^{1,4}. 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 worldwide⁴. 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 observed^{1,4}. As a matter of fact, for the first time nutrition has

attracted so much priority on the global political level⁴. 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 Nutrition^{1,4}. 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 levels^{3,4}.

It is important to acknowledge that even though the underlying issues are complex, the probable solutions for each one of them are same⁴. 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 practices^{1,3}.

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

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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.

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