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Editorial

Introduction to the 2nd issue of World Nutrition for 2024

Ted Greiner[1]

[1] Editor, World Nutrition

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Correspondence: tedgreiner@yahoo.com

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Our parent organization, the World Public Health Nutrition Association, just held its quadrennial Congress in cooperation with the University of Westminster in London on the overall topic "Questioning the Solutions: Has the Decade of Nutrition delivered?" Francesco Branca, the Director of the Department of Nutrition and Food Safety at WHO, gave the keynote speech on this topic, explaining what has and has not worked. Many others added details from around the world.

Sadly, a world in which wealth has concentrated so intensively as has been the case over the past 40+ years, is simply not a world prepared to deliver for its unfortunate victims suffering from hunger and malnutrition, especially in situations of extreme conflict and genocide as we see ongoing in Sudan and Gaza. Indeed, we are witnessing a dramatic moment in history which will decide if progressives are able to attain and maintain enough political power to change the world for the better or whether democracy itself will sink under the growing global resurgence of what might be called the New Fascism in all its various forms of authoritarianism, all well suited to the needs of the global nouveau riche and their giant oligopolistic corporations.

In the field of public health nutrition, we are also witnessing a "do or die" scenario. As usual, WPHNA is out front in confronting the food industry and avoiding any hint of the conflicts of interest most nutrition associations (and nutrition journals) are burdened with, as illustrated by the lack of any funding from them (or their presence at all) for this Congress. This independence allows WPHNA to highlight what I believe is going to be the kind of long-running struggle with industry that we have so far only witnessed (for half a century) in the case of the so-called "baby killers," the industry that produces and promotes commercial foods for infants and young children, in a vicious, never-ending competition with breastfeeding.

Led by my old friend Carlos Monteiro, who first published its discovery in 2009, the Congress highlighted the growing evidence base for the damage to human health (and the environment) being caused by ultra-processed foods. Carlos has called for labelling these so-called foods with the same kind of warning labels that are now widely required on tobacco products.

More importantly, subsidies of all kinds must be removed from all forms of sugar/sweeteners, maize, and soy, and the many chemical treating agents that these products are created from. Ways to tax them are only just beginning to be explored and will no doubt be the front lines in the battles to come between industry and activists. The food industry will be ramping up its responses, as is being documented in multiple articles published in this journal. (A search of "food industry" on our home page results in 104 hits and I dare say none of them are laudatory.) As always when industry is being called to account, its greatest power with governments is misleading threats that any attacks on its activities and products will result in a loss of jobs.

Thus, the editorial staff of World Nutrition would like to welcome its readers to submit research, literature reviews, opinion pieces, book reviews, and letters to the editor on any aspect of the topic of ultra-processed foods.

The current issue of World Nutrition has more research articles than we have published before in a single issue. It begins with something new that we hope to repeat, including with our own WPHNA Congresses, the proceedings of an important conference in the field of public health nutrition. The first three articles in this issue are thus an editorial by Adegboye et al. introducing the conference: "The 1st International Conference on Sustainable Health and Nutrition During the Life Cycle." It was held at Rio de Janeiro State University from March 19 to 21, 2024, with over 350 registered participants, most from Latin America. The next article, edited by Adegboye, presents the keynote and other presentations, and the third, also edited by Adegboye, presents abstracts and posters from the congress, all translated to English. Its focuses included agroecology and traditional foods. The conference underscored the unsustainability of the current food system, characterized by low biodiversity, low access and poor food quality and by high consumption of ultra-processed foods. It emphasized and gave early examples of community action in these areas of concern about our modern food system.

The next paper, by Konlan et al., is the fourth in a series, the first three of which were published in our previous issue. Konlon et al. present a "before and after" evaluation (with no control group) of a large-scale World Vision project in three districts in Ghana promoting sustainable, increased production and consumption at household level of more nutritious foods. These included eggs, orange-fleshed sweet potatoes, and fruit trees. The project resulted in substantial improvements in dietary diversity among infants, young

children, and women over a two-year period.

Next, Zakariah-Akoto et al. utilize qualitative methods to explore problems with iron-folate supplementation among pregnant women in two Ghanaian hospital patient populations. While most women correctly recognized some dietary measures to control iron deficiency, as well as supplements, a number of barriers were identified that resulted in failures to adhere to the supplementation regimen they were prescribed.

Turingan et al. compare dietary diversity among families that garden and do not garden in one district in Quezon City, Philippines. Although gardening did not seem to make a dramatic difference in this setting, vegetable gardeners were likelier to meet the recommended level of vegetable consumption and had a higher dietary diversity score.

Olumakaiye et al. assessed the nutritional status of in-school adolescent girls in three zones of Nigeria and made comparisons by age groups in urban vs. peri-urban areas. Using several anthropometric methods, they found that this population was relatively healthy nutritionally. Based on BMI, 9.8% were underweight and 7% were either overweight or obese, with older and urban girls more likely to be overweight.

Abbas et al. conducted a series of experiments to identify levels of fortification of whole wheat chapattis with powdered carrot (both raw and fermented) that would be the most desirable organoleptically. Then, in a randomized controlled trial, these three types of chapatti were all found capable of decreasing fasting blood glucose levels in adults with type 2 diabetes. However, the chapattis fortified with fermented carrot consistently achieved a greater impact on blood sugar and on blood lipid parameters.

Finally, Maaz et al. provide a very detailed literature review of tuberculosis and the role of micronutrients in its control. Because drug treatment of TB is so difficult and often causes adverse effects, greater research attention needs to focus on the potential role of the following micronutrients: copper, zinc, selenium, iron, vitamin A, vitamin C, vitamin D, vitamin B6, and vitamin E.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None

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