

World Nutrition

Manifesto

World Nutrition, the journal of the World Public Health Nutrition Association, is an international on-line journal. But there's more to it than electronic technology. The essential difference between *WN* and other journals is one of scope and attitude. Typically, nutrition journals are mainly concerned with information, and seek to describe their world as it is. *WN* respects facts, and at the same time it is mainly concerned with ideas. It will see the world as it is, and also as it can and should be.

Other journals, notably *Public Health Nutrition*, publish the findings of original research. There is no need to duplicate this essential function. The need is for a journal whose contributors have scope to think and reflect on the significance of established and emerging experience and evidence, and on how best to shape policies and programmes that protect the human species, the living and physical world, and the biosphere, now and in future. This is part of the task of **World Nutrition**.

The vision

The vision of *WN* is of nutrition as a social as well as a biological science, guided by ethical, ecological and evolutionary principles, and with economic, environmental and other dimensions.

Academic courses and textbooks, as well as journals, popular writing, and most types of practice, usually state or assume that the science and discipline of nutrition is biological. Nutrition does have a foundation in biochemistry, but is relevant and meaningful only inasmuch as it recognises and promotes family, community and population health, and other public goods. By analogy, architects are trained to know about the tensile strength of bricks and steel, but the discipline of architecture is not a branch of physics.

The work of everybody concerned with the health, welfare and well-being of populations has social, cultural, economic, environmental and political contexts. This is true in China and India, South Africa and the Sudan, Iraq and Afghanistan, Australia, Japan, Chile, Cuba, Sweden, Israel, Greece, Britain, and the United States of America. It is true everywhere.

Properly perceived, nutrition *is* public health nutrition. This implies good understanding of associated disciplines, and engagement or alliances between actors at all levels in government, civil society, industry, the media, and other professions. It also implies acceptance that changes in the nutritional health of populations are usually not the result of actions for which nutrition professionals are responsible.

The big picture

The perennial crisis of undernutrition illustrates the need to see the big picture. Food and nutrition security is fundamental to human health, welfare, potential, and progress. So is regional, national, and local independence and self-determination, and that of communities and families.

In emergency and acute situations, adequate nutrition is often necessarily supplied, if not sustained, by external intervention. But populations whose communities and families are sometimes, often or usually hungry, or who lack nourishment, have rights to more than that. Good health, in all societies and at all levels, begins at and before birth. It is protected by exclusive breastfeeding, freedom from incessant infections and infestations, adequate and varied food supplies, and reliable sanitation and safe water. It is sustained also by public goods such as primary health care accessible to everybody, universal basic education, and the empowerment of people as citizens.

Well-being also depends on freedom of speech and assembly, secure and rewarding employment, respect for knowledge and beliefs based on

experience, upholding of individual, family and community rights and entitlements, and reliable and accountable governance at all levels. Future as well as present security also requires protection of the natural and managed resource base that is the source of all food on land and at sea; and perhaps above all, lives lived in hope and in the reasonable expectation of peace.

Some or even most of these rights and needs are goals that are beyond the reach of many populations. All the more reason to recognise them, remember their essential importance and relevance to nutrition, and work to achieve them.

As individuals none of us can become authorities on all the aspects and implications of nutrition and public health. Collectively, we can. This is one purpose of the World Public Health Nutrition Association.

The potential

Debates, commentary, challenges to conventional wisdom – these are the kinds of contribution that *WN* will carry. It will support and celebrate all that is best about modern industrial and technological development. It will include discussion of the significance and implications of discovery and thinking, such as those now being made in the fields of epigenetics and systems theory. *WN* will also embrace the richness and variety of human experience and culture. It will pay attention to the points of view of societies and communities, in high-income as well as low-income regions and countries, that are impoverished or excluded, or that do not equate development with more cash, or whose ways of life are traditional.

The views expressed within *WN* are not those of the Association, unless this is explicitly stated. They are the judgements and opinions of the authors, who usually are Association members. Contributions will always invite and often will need responses, sometimes from alternative or opposing points of view.

WN is now making a modest beginning. Initially it will include just one commentary every month, usually on a topic accepted as important to world public health nutrition. Each contribution will be accompanied by an editorial that puts its topic in a broad context. Responses to commentaries will also be included within *WN*. Authors will be profiled on this website. Later we plan to add more contributions. In time, if the Association membership wants this, and if a substantial number of members become contributors, **World Nutrition** may develop into a full-scale journal complete with rapid response capability. To achieve this we need more Association members to join the editorial team and to contribute. That's up to you.

The editorial board