

Introduction to the first issue of World Nutrition for 2019

This time we have the usual fascinating, if mixed, group of articles of interest to the public health nutrition community.

This issue starts with our routine but rousing Good Question editorial from our Deputy Editor, George Kent. This time he asks “What is done with questionable foods?”, focusing on the example of infant formula.

We then offer two research papers off the beaten track. The first, by Keith et al, is a qualitative study and situation report on infant feeding from the now infamous low-income, high-immigrant Tower Hamlets area of London. The second, by Schmier and Chang, is a researcher’s research article exploring methodological issues that will enable us to better do research on the economic aspects of what we do in the nutrition field.

Next come two literature reviews that I believe are quite important. The first, by Ioannis Tsoukalas, is about a ubiquitous additive to processed foods and a common nutritional supplement—lecithin. It may play a role in the causation of the current epidemic of depression. Second is a paper I wrote (ably reviewed by our Deputy Editor—who ensures me readers will not suffer as badly from this version as he did from the two earlier ones—and the peer review of which was administered by our new Associate Editor, Melissa Mialon). It is about the emotive issue of alcohol consumption while breastfeeding. Reviewing the inadequate human literature on various aspects of this issue, I conclude that recent literature is suggesting it is more harmful than has earlier been assumed.

Then we come to one of WN’s fortes, commentaries, of which this issue includes three. First is a powerful paper from a major contributor to WN in the past, Carlos Monteiro, co-authored by our former editor, Geoffrey Cannon. If you want to better understand how the ultra-processed food industry is causing the global obesity and NCD epidemic and what can be done about it, read this paper. Second is a thought-provoking piece by Deputy Editor George Kent comparing infant formula to breastfeeding. Finally, another paper we should all read to familiarize ourselves with how food and nutrition can be viewed from a human rights perspective as a commons. Vivero-Pol shows us how the production, distribution, and consumption of food can be changed to ensure that no one goes hungry.

This issue of WN returns to an earlier tradition: a hefty letters to the editor section. It begins with a debate between George Kent and staff from the Evolve Biosystems company. I learned a lot from these letters and suspect they are on to a public health issue that has received far too little attention: the disappearance of the standard microbiome that the human race always had, what effects this might have, and at least one commercial remedy. Next, we publish a series of tributes to a major force in our field, Dr. Elisabet Helsing of Norway. Our final letter describes what is being done for the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. Finally, this issue is completed with a book review by Melissa Mialon of the book “Governments Push Infant Formula” by George Kent.