

Fighting malnutrition with education

Improving the academic training of healthcare professionals in human nutrition is necessary to fight malnutrition

LAUSANNE, VAUD, SWITZERLAND, February 22, 2017 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Improving the academic training of healthcare professionals in human nutrition is necessary to fight malnutrition – scientists propose three main areas to be tackled.

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Maurizio Muscaritoli

Malnutrition manifests itself as both over- and under-nutrition, and is currently not diagnosed and treated in time. It leads to serious health problems, including the estimated 60% of cardiovascular deaths. [Maurizio Muscaritoli](#), researcher at the Italian Federation of Nutritional Societies and his colleagues suggest that an accurate training of healthcare professionals may be at the heart of solving this problem.

In [a recent study published in Frontier in Nutrition](#), the research team identified the criteria and guiding concepts to be applied in the academic training of human nutrition. This is the first attempt to more clearly define the cultural identity of human nutrition in both an academic and professional orientated perspective. In total, three domains of human nutrition were identified: Basic Nutrition, Applied Nutrition, and Clinical Nutrition.

“Take obesity as an example, it is still frequently not recognized as a disease state, the issue of undernutrition in elderly and obese individuals is therefore largely overlooked,” says Muscaritoli.

The scientists argue that the biological significance of food in the collective imagination has been lost in favor of its hedonistic aspects. People only look at nutrients as a number, but not as something with nutritional value. They do not consider the food matrix nor biological function.

Basic Nutrition is the discipline that deals with the scientific basis of human nutrition. This domain studies and characterizes the presence, bioavailability, mechanisms, and biochemical-physiological roles of nutrients and bioactive molecules.

Applied Nutrition, on the other hand, deals with the relationship between nutrition and the health and wellbeing of a population. This domain, for example, concentrates on improving the nutritional qualities of foods and envisions guidelines for healthy eating.

Lastly, the domain of Clinical Nutrition focusses on assessing, preventing, diagnosing, and treating malnutrition.

“The three domains have their own cultural and scientific identity corresponding to specific professional skills, but they should all be integrated in the academic training,” says Muscaritoli. To that extent, the team identified the subject matter to be covered in such a nutrition curriculum.

With this set of criteria and guiding concepts, the scientists make a first attempt to improve the academic training in human nutrition.

“We hope this will lead to a better integration of the available knowledge on human nutrition in the daily practice of healthcare professionals – and turn the tide of the current cultural confusion of the nutritional scenario,” explains Muscaritoli, who is also Specialty Chief Editor of Clinical Nutrition, in *Frontiers in Nutrition*.

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