



A McCarrison Society Conference

Nutrition of School Children:

Health Implications of the Abandonment of Nutrition Education

14th November 2002 (Thursday), 5.00pm - 7.30pm
The Medical Society of London (11 Chandos Street, London W1G 9EB)

■ **Chairperson:** **Major Christopher Robinson**
(Chairman, The Little Foundation & The Mother and Child Foundation)

Last century the average height rose in the UK by 0.4 inches/decade. The incidence of heart disease rose from a rarity to no 1 cause of mortality. Obesity affects an increasing proportion of the population and diabetes is rising here and dramatically in developing countries with newly acquired wealth. These changes cannot be explained by any change in the genome. That environmental and nutritional influences have affected health is evident from this dramatic change in shape size and disease pattern in one century. The logic of this situation demands that children be empowered by knowledge on nutrition and health. Nutrition and home economics need to be re-introduced in schools, otherwise we will fail to meet the challenge of health.

■ Program

- 4.00 - 4.55 pm Registration & Tea
- 5.00 - 5.30 pm **The challenge for nutrition and health, the need for education of children**
by Professor Michael Crawford, CBIol, FIBiol, FRCPath
(Research Director, Institute of Brain Chemistry and Human Nutrition, London Metropolitan University, London)
- 5.30 - 6.15 pm **Cleave Award Lecture**
School children, their health and the challenge
by Dr Amanda Kirby, MBBS, MRCP, MFFP
(Director, The Discovery Centre, Cardiff)
- 6.00 - 6.20 pm **The role of nutrition in attention deficit disorder and the importance of nutrition in childhood**
by Dr Alex Richardson (University Laboratory of Physiology, Oxford)
- 6.20 - 6.40 pm **The Welsh experience in nutrition and health**
by David Smith (The Welsh Food Alliance, Cardiff)
- 6.40 - 7.00 pm **Marketing to kids and fighting back**
by Tim Lobstein & Kath Dalmey (The Food Commission, London)
- 7.00 - 7.30 pm Discussion
- 7.30 - 9.00 pm Buffet & Informal Discussion

■ Reservation

Places must be reserved as space is limited. Please contact Ms Debbie Jeske to make reservation.

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■ Fee*

McCarrison Society Member
: Free if reservation is made before 1st November afterwards a charge of £25 applies

Non-member : £40

Charities & Academics : £25

Students : £5

(*Includes tea, buffet and use of facilities)

■ Acknowledgements

This meeting is sponsored jointly by the McCarrison Society and the Mother and Child Foundation.

ABSTRACTS

The challenge for nutrition and health, the need for education of children

by Professor Michale Crawford, CBIol, FIBiol, FRCPath

For 5 million years or more we ate wild foods and our physiology is still inescapably so adapted. There is now good evidence that the Western disease cluster - heart disease, obesity, breast and colon cancer – arose from the changes in food last century. Diabetes and mental ill health is rapidly rising and notably amongst young people. How can young people make sensible choices on foods if they have no knowledge about food and nutrition? How can people make judgements on food policy and production if they lack the education? Nutrition education which used to be included in home economics. Unless school children are educated about nutrition and health and empowered with knowledge to make informed choices, we will fail to meet the need to deliver the basic human right of good food and good health.

Cleave Award Lecture:

School children, their health and the challenge

by Dr Amanda Kirby, MBBS, MRCGP, MFFP

Dr Amanda Kirby was voted Doctor of the Year in 1995 for her work in Women's Health. She runs a centre for children and adults with dyspraxia and other learning difficulties which gives her first hand experience of the problems facing children's health, especially mental health. She will explore the current position compared to 50 years ago regarding children's nutrition and health, nutrition in schools and the family, and the pressures from advertising. There are no quick fixes but the serious challenge needs to be addressed.

The role of nutrition in attention deficit disorder and the importance of nutrition in childhood

by Dr Alex Richardson

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) encompasses a broad constellation of behavioural and learning problems and its definition and aetiology remain controversial. At least some features may reflect an underlying abnormality of fatty acid metabolism and potentially be susceptible to treatment. The underlying principles may be applicable to the nutrition of school children and their learning capacity.

The Welsh experience in nutrition and health

by David Smith

The Welsh Food Alliance has been especially active in representing good nutrition and agriculture as means to addressing the high prevalence of Western type diseases in Wales. David will outline the history of the Alliance, its successes and failures. He will outline the constraints against putting nutrition and health principles into policy and practice and leave with recommendations of how best to overcome the real constraints which are mitigating against a nutrition and health policy for the country.

Marketing to kids and fighting back

by Tim Lobstein & Kath Dalmey

For over 15 years, the campaigning organisation, the Food Commission, has been investigating and reporting on how poor quality foods are being promoted to children. It is time to fight back – by developing the right tools, identifying the weakest points, mounting consumer campaigns, lobbying legislators and shaming the worst offenders.

School Children and Nutrition

The rapid rise in mental ill-health affects young people. The risk increases with year in those born from 1955-75. By the year 2020, the incidence of mental ill health will have climbed to reach the top three in the 'burden of ill-health' (www.globalforumhealth.org).

Dr Joe Hibbeln from the National Institutes of Health in the USA, addressed our Society at last year's meeting on this subject. At a recent lecture in Washington, he postulated that the reason for the rise in mental ill-health was inadequate nutrition during fetal life and childhood. Mental ill-health is increasing from country to country following on the previous rise in mortality from heart disease. This fact suggests a nutritional effect on the brain. The brain is much better protected than any other organ and therefore would be expected to experience a time lag, following vascular disorder, before brain disorder begins to appear in the epidemiological statistics.

Several clinical trials have now shown that behavioural problems, violence and depression in young people can be reduced by proper nutrition. There are also three clinical trials showing that sudden death from heart disease can be reduced by similar nutrition strategies.

- Today violence, behavioural problems, anxiety and depression are increasingly being noticed in school children.
- Post-partum depression in young women is now being identified as starting at 32 weeks into the pregnancy.
- Moreover obesity in children has been on the increase. The risk of diabetes, adverse pregnancy outcomes, heart disease and cancer increase with obesity.

The reality of the health challenge today is that heart disease, stroke, mental ill-health, diabetes, obesity and adverse pregnancy outcome all have a strong nutritional aetiology. It should be also noted that the successes in extended life expectancy and quality of life in genetic disorders such as cystic fibrosis, phenylketoneuria, peroxisomal disorders and Prader Willy syndrome have this far been achieved by nutritional management. In the practice of health management, recovery from surgery, kidney and liver failure, critical patient care, preterm

infant nutrition and food for those in bed rest in hospitals, the management of disability such as cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, stroke and spinal injury. All demand a targeted nutritional strategy. Yet how far does nutrition education, even in medical schools, address the basic science underpinning these issues?

Why is it that our school children are not taught about the principles of nutrition and health?

Why was it that nutrition and home economics was dropped from the school curriculum?

Why is it that knowledge which would have empowered children and young adults to make informed decisions about food and life style has been denied?

If Sesame Street can use Kermit the Frog and a beautiful, pregnant lady to teach about tiny tots how a fetus and a new born child is fed, then it is possible to teach nutrition and home economics at increasing levels of knowledge from primary school to O and A level.

As far as we can see, there can be no argument against the urgency of empowering the children with knowledge. All that is required is the political will.

The McCarrison Society will present a report on the need for nutrition education in schools to the Government. Evidence and comment is important!

Please contribute in writing or e-mail before or at the conference on the 14th November.

