

## Meeting Report

# Nutrition education and behaviour modification in cancer prevention: Summary of Working Group 1

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### Summary of Group 1

The 'Workshop of Diet, Lifestyle and Chronic Disease Risk: Assessing and Improving Strategies for Preventive Interventions – A Global Perspective', held Saturday 25 and 26 August, 2001 in Vienna as a pre-congress event of the 17th International Congress on Nutrition, was sponsored by four IUNS committees: the Committee on Ageing and Nutrition; the Committee on Urbanization and Nutrition; the Committee on Environmental Pollution and Nutrition; and the Committee on Nutrition Transition. The Affiliated Sponsors were: the Australasian Nutrition Advisory Council; The Society for International Nutrition Research; The Diet and Cancer Research Interest Section (RIS) of the American Society for Nutritional Sciences (ASNS); the Nutritional Epidemiology RIS of the ASNS; and the Ageing and Chronic Disease RIS of the ASNS.

Contributors shared experiences, views, ideas and visions with international perspectives hailing from Malaysia, Venezuela, UK, USA and Australia. All participants were active in the field of nutrition education and considerable discussion around diet adequacy and excess was expressed. The debate was wide-ranging and although originally focused on educational dimensions, the context of any dietary modifications were discussed at length.

Overall, it was felt that the use of guidelines and dietary education must exist within an appropriate framework and context. The concept of sustainable community development where education and health policy is intertwined with environmental considerations, appropriate economic climate and political stability, is ideal. Responsibilities for nutrition education must start with relevant government ministers (including health, education, agriculture and rural affairs) and it must be recognized that education is no substitute for addressing issues related to access and availability of food and that educational objectives must take account of social and cultural norms. Theory must be moved into practices deemed culturally acceptable by the population. In addition appropriate programs need appropriate budgets!

Overall, the group agreed that nutrition is a state responsibility and measures such as taxation and advertising control might be appropriate to assist the population in dietary change. It was also recognized that a lot of the population do not want to know about nutrition, or change what they eat, so strategies for change must reach way beyond information-transfer to motivational prompts and

clever social marketing strategies. There is no one route to achieve dietary change; many and mixed approaches need to be attempted to meet the needs of many and mixed groups.

The global approach taken by WCRF/AICR was appreciated by the group, although the challenge of promoting nutrient intake that ensures dietary adequacy whilst avoiding dietary excess, lead to interesting debate. Specific issues that were highlighted for possible incorporation into the next WCRF report included meaningful food variety score, eating for pleasure and using concepts of family (or social) eating as a focus for advice. Within education programs, there was universal agreement on the importance of using the school career as an opportunity for nutrition education, not just in curriculum work but also within the school lunch program and presenting clear and consistent examples of knowledge into action.

Areas of the report which were felt to need further clarification for nutrition education purposes included BMI figures for differing ethnic groups, clearer definitions relating to weight gain in adult life, separate messages for fruits and vegetables and clear messages on other plant foods such as use of the terms 'minimally processed' or 'preferable wholegrains'. The statement on alcoholic drinks was felt to be poorly worded. There were pleas for clearer statements on cooked or uncooked meat weights; and the message on food safety and cooking foods needs to be properly made to balance messages on avoiding charring.

Overall, the group applauded the concept of global guidelines, felt it important that they should be reviewed regularly but recognized that there is also a need to ensure that user communities understand the messages and that the voice of the consumer must also inform the strategy of the educator.

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