

Editorial

Public health nutrition in the Asia Pacific region

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The key public health nutrition issues in the Asia Pacific Region are:

- The combined problems of *stunting and positive energy balance* in the one generation, and from one generation to the next.
- *Urbanization* and its effects on physical activity, food choice and nutrient partitioning.
- Changing *demography* with an ageing population.
- *Loss of traditional food culture* with its beliefs and skills.
- *Remoteness from place of food production* with vulnerability to pricing because of transport, storage and "value-addedness".

At the same time new opportunities present:

- *Development at an early stage* without the "baggage" of outdated facilities.
- High regard for *education* with high levels of achievement.
- *Competitive advantage* through long periods of dominantly uni-directional information flow (European to Asian).
- Development of a new synthetic *value system*.
- *Economic dynamism*
- *Food cultures* intrinsically protective against CNCD (chronic non-communicable disease)
- Supportive *Networks*.

Some examples of National and Novel public health nutrition activities include:

Malaysia

- The *6 yearly cycle* of *Annual Health Promotion* campaigns, which from 1991-1996 were mainly disease or reproductive age/early life specific (eg. heart disease, cancer, diabetes), but from 1997 are more integrative eg. "Healthy Eating" in 1997.
- *Town Planning* for more spiritually conducive and physically active environments (eg. safe precincts to exercise; external and "open" stairways-firescapes for high risk buildings).
- Retention of *Village functionality within the metropolis*.

China-Tianjin

- Nutritional Epidemiology and Intervention on a major scale
- New economic food marketing and pricing strategies
- Redefinition of health properties of traditional foods and beverages, like fungi and Chinese tea.

Thailand

- Village development with industry partnership (TBIRD, Thai Business in Rural Development, programme of Dr Mechai Viravaidya)
- Children - grandparent relationships as part of studies in later life.

Although nutritionally-related health problems have already emerged in the economically-transitional and urbanising Asia Pacific region, there remain good prospects that those experienced in older industrialized societies will be largely circumvented.