

## Nutrition and Health in Undergraduate Medical Curriculum

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### Letter to the Editor

World Health Organization has recognized the importance of nutrition as an indicator in the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) focusing on the reduction of maternal and under-5-years mortality, especially in the developing countries [1]. The prevalence of micronutrient deficiencies in both pregnant and non-pregnant women continues to be endemic [2]. The National Nutrition Survey (NNS), discovered the following micronutrient deficiency levels in pregnant women: anaemia 50.4%, iron deficiency anaemia 24.7%, vitamin A deficiency 42.5%, zinc deficiency 47.6%, hypocalcaemia 58.9% and vitamin D deficiency 68.9%. Among children under 5, 43.7% were stunted in 2011 as compared to 41.6% in the 2001 NNS, 15.1% were wasted as compared to 14.3% in 2001 and 31.5% were underweight.

Appropriate information regarding nutrition promotes healthy eating [3]. Poor or deficient knowledge about health and nutrition on the part of health professionals is reflected in lack of identification of risk factors for nutritional deficiency diseases. This also plays an important role in insufficient use of dietary component while managing patients recovering from illness, leading to increased morbidity and mortality [4].

Dissatisfaction with the quality of nutrition education in primary care [5] is evident from literature. With the recognition of disease burden due to nutritional factors deficiency and perspective of its

correction, comes the demand that physicians update their knowledge of health and nutrition and improve their counseling skills related to diet, nutrition and healthy life styles [6]. It is therefore desired to produce medical graduates fully equipped with the skills to practice nutrition for optimal health and prevention of disease in all the three tiers of society (self, family and community) thereby improving national indicators of morbidity and mortality.

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