

## Letters to the Editor

### *Leaf concentrate. Undernutrition*

#### **Testimony from a clinic in Senegal**

Madam

I have been in charge of the clinic at Djilas in Senegal for several years. I know the benefits of leaf concentrate<sup>(1)</sup> extracted from lucerne.

*Pregnant women:* Taking leaf concentrate during the later months of pregnancy, without Fe supplements, improves their general physical condition; no more vertigo, wasting or anaemia. They carry on with their normal activities. They bring into the world beautiful babies weighing on average 3.8 kg instead of the former 2.3 kg. They have easy deliveries, nothing like what we had been accustomed to, and their milk flows quickly.

*Lactation:* For women who are dry the effect is spectacular; two days after starting to take leaf concentrate their milk flows. It is good milk. The baby cries no more.

*Healing:* For patients with serious and deep wounds (boils, carbuncles, abscesses, varicose ulcers) taking leaf concentrate promotes rapid healing of the wound and general improvement.

*Children:* I also supervise the distribution of leaf concentrate to day nurseries and primary schools, to about 600 children. After a few months the teachers observed that the children were putting on weight and were in better health with less absence, more attentive in class and taking greater part in sports. They also have fewer episodes of malaria. Leaf concentrate really helps them grow up well.

Arnaud Coly

Emmaus Clinic of the Sisters of Saint Thomas de Villeneuve  
Djilas, Senegal  
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#### *Reference*

1. Davys G (2009) The greatest untapped food resource on earth? (Letter) *Public Health Nutr* **12**, 142–143.

### *Nutrition as a whole*

#### **The Out of the Box effect**

Madam

I am a medical doctor, currently a postdoctoral fellow at Columbia University, New York, USA. I was introduced

to your Out of the Box column in 2006 as a PhD student in Nutrition, at the University of Chile. Our professors Dr Eva Hertrampf and Dr Daniel Lopez de Romaña had the idea that we could learn English and also Nutrition by reading the column and writing about the topics it covered – topics that are obvious, but often neglected or avoided in academic discussion. The columns were given to us a few days before our weekly meetings, when we were expected to read out our essays about them, and then discuss them. This succeeded, because the author of this column succeeds in the first place. We learned English, and we learned Nutrition.

I kept on reading the column. It has a therapeutic effect on me. It does not depend on the topic itself, or if I agree or disagree with what it says. It puts in words thoughts that are floating in our minds and hence gives them existence. If we disagree this is even better; if you get annoyed with what the writer is saying, you plan your counterarguments, you find out what your opinion is, or you decide on one if you do not have it already. You *think*.

For me nutrition is amazing. Its aspects include ethics, culture, economics, education, evolution, politics, society, health, people, cells, molecules, atoms, flavours, psychology, pleasure – and so on. My research field at the moment is very basic aspects of obesity. I know how complex this condition is, and that all the factors listed above are implicated in its pathogenesis. But sometimes (quite often, to be frank) I lose perspective.

When I am lost what I think about is the protein, the cellular signalling, the experiment that did not work, the publication that did not come out. But then there it is, the column that reminds me about nutrition as a whole; and there it is, the magic therapeutic effect. I am reminded that what I am working on is part of something bigger. Once again I remember that it makes sense to conduct specific research in order to understand, explain and find answers to these various aspects.

Marcela Reyes

University of Chile, Santiago

Email: mreyes@inta.cl

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