

Guest Editorial

Public health nutrition comes of age

As nutritional science advances, so there are more and more opportunities for applying its lessons on a population basis. The need for a population-based approach to nutritional change is not just an issue for developing countries. The recent report on the Global Burden of Disease makes it clear that there is no longer a dichotomy between 'chronic diseases' associated with 'developed' societies and communicable diseases associated with 'transitional' and 'developing' countries. Nutrition plays a key, if not dominant, role in most health problems around the world, and future research needs to deal with the complexity of problems of over- and under-nutrition occurring in the same country at the same time. There is a need to have a more dynamic relationship between research and the application of the findings of research to the solution of the key public health problems.

Thus, the discipline of public health nutrition is emerging throughout the world. Papers dealing with public health and epidemiological issues have been appearing for many years in the *British Journal of Nutrition* as in other major nutritional journals. However, we now feel that the new discipline has matured to the stage at which a new journal devoted specifically to this field is needed. We are therefore launching the journal *Public Health Nutrition (PHN)*, to be published, like the *British Journal of Nutrition (BJN)*, by CAB INTERNATIONAL on behalf of The Nutrition Society. *PHN* will form a sister journal to the *BJN*, *Proceedings of the Nutrition Society* and *Nutrition Research Reviews*. The emphasis of the new journal will be the promotion of good health through nutrition and the primary prevention of diet-related illness in the population. The journal will have an international perspective and a population-based approach to the practical application of research findings.

Areas to be covered will include:

- nutritional epidemiological studies addressing the relationship between nutrition and health or disease risk in any/all societies
- nutrition-related health promotion
- evaluation of the effectiveness of intervention studies aimed at improving nutrition-related health
- role of nutrition in high-risk and vulnerable groups
- development of research methods, validation of measures, calibration
- population-based research related to primary prevention of illness.

PHN will be published quarterly, beginning early in 1998. The journal will have scientific papers, reviews, editorials, commentaries, and a letters to the editor section. There are four editors: Dr Barrie Margetts (UK, and Editor-in-Chief); Dr Lenore Kohlmeier (USA and receiving editor for North America); Dr Michael Nelson (UK); Dr Frans Kok (The Netherlands); and 13 associate editors: Dr Faruk Ahmed (Bangladesh); Dr Annie Anderson (UK); Dr Tim Cole (UK); Dr Ian Darnton-Hill (USA); Dr Kerin O'Dea (Australia); Dr Pirjo Pietinen (Finland); Dr John Potter (USA); Dr Shoba Rao (India); Dr Elio Riboli (France); Dr Prakash Shetty (UK); Dr Nelia Steyn (South Africa); Dr Susan Walker (Jamaica); Ms Agneta Yngve (Sweden). If, in the early years, there are papers submitted to one of the sister journals which the editors feel would be more appropriate in another, then the editorial teams will liaise and consult with the authors about redirection of material submitted.

For further details of the new journal, how to subscribe and how to submit papers, please write to the Nutrition Society Editorial Office or to CAB INTERNATIONAL, or visit the Society's web pages at <http://www.nutsoc.org.uk> or CABI's at <http://www.cabi.org>.

Apart from the launch of this new, international journal, the development of the new discipline is being marked by developments within The Nutrition Society. The Nutrition Society has been a learned Society since its inception in 1941; over the last 5–10 years the Society has widened its view of what it feels it should be engaged in, and has become much more like a professional society, covering both the academic and the wider needs of its members. The developments in public health nutrition were facilitated by this change together with the publication in the UK of the white paper on the Health of the Nation in 1992. The white paper focused attention on the need for suitably trained people, a need that has been acknowledged by the Department of Health. The Nutrition Society has taken up the challenge and has led the development of public health nutrition, culminating in the launch of the Register of Public Health Nutritionists on 1 December, 1997. The aims of the register are to set and maintain standards for the training and education of public health nutritionists. The objects are to ensure:

- that people working in public health nutrition have a minimum and agreed level of competence
- evidence-based policy
- sound advice to the general public,

with the ultimate aim of improving the health of the population. The register lists the names of appropriately qualified individuals. The Society is developing an accreditation process for courses that meet the requirements for training individuals in public health nutrition. The Society also plans to widen its role in professional development by including registration of individuals as competent in general nutrition. For further information

please contact the Development Officer of The Nutrition Society.

The discipline of public health nutrition has therefore, in our opinion, come of age. We look forward to seeing its development over the years to come.

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