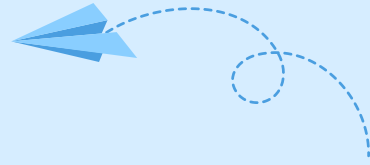




EssaysMasters.com



# Global Health and Healthcare Issues

Student's Name

Institutional Affiliation



# Global Health and Healthcare Issues



## INTRODUCTION

The issue of food security and supply has featured prominently in the global agenda over the last years. This has been orchestrated by the factors such as increase in world's population, global climate change, and the prevalence rate of severe weather conditions. These conditions, among others, have plummeted the world into a situation of dire needs calling for quick and prompt action to restore sustainability in the food and agricultural sector. In line with existing challenges facing food security, it is important to understand the implications of general dietary intake patterns as well as the associated nutrients intake in case of a fall in the level of consumption from a sustainability perspective. From a nutritional standpoint, the initial reaction that called for less consumption of meat has been substituted by questions to whether the existing dietary guidelines can be taken to constitute a sustainable dietary pattern for current and future generations (Herman et al., 2014). The following discussion aims at answering some of the questions relating to food supply and security using a nutritional perspective.

## A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Beginning at conception, nutrition plays an important role in determining health wellbeing of an individual. In essence, nutrition is affected by a

number of factors including but not limited to behavioral factors, environmental exposures, social, physical, and biological factors as well as individuals' experiences in life. This point towards the need for healthcare practitioners to include nutrition as focal point when defining or addressing solutions is aimed at improving healthcare outcomes. In this context, nutritional science provides key findings in support of the need to use a life course perspective in understanding health needs both domestically and internationally (Holtz, Plitnick, & Friedman, 2012). The evidence also points towards the need to improve health between various developmental stages and across different generations. This is achieved through provision of micronutrient dense diets, opportunities for balancing nutrient intake with physical exercise, and the urgency for improving social, biological, and physical environments. All these factors contribute to success of human development throughout the lifespan.

Since the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, the number of researchers concerned with nutritional science has increased tremendously given the role of nutrition in determining health wellbeing of species. These studies are based on the knowledge that most health problems are the resultants of deficiencies in vitamins and other nutritional components today. Since the first researcher proposed this statement in 1912, the research into nutritional science has been fast tracked with researchers endeavoring to devise new solution to existing medical problems through nutritional improvements (Buttriss, 2013). Today, it is highly accepted that nutrients play a vital role in all development stages of different species including humans. Most of the medical solutions available today partially consisting albeit of some kind of nutritional recommendations are aimed at

improving healthcare outcomes.

## | **HEALTHCARE DISPARITIES/INEQUALITIES**

Globally, good nutrition is considered as a human right and a basis for good health. Despite this, many regions around the world lack food security, and it is not uncommon, especially in developing countries, to witness cases of malnutrition and related diseases. It is worth noting that the primary sources of energy differ from one region to the other and across countries. For example, in the United States, the main source of energy consists of potato-rich diets, while rice forms the main source of diet in Asian countries. It is also important to differentiate between micronutrients and macronutrients. The former type of nutrients consists mainly of enzyme co-factors, and their required intake levels are low. The latter type consists mainly of starch, fats, and amino acids in a form of protein mainly. This type of nutrients is the main source of energy, and its availability and intake is dependent on a number of factors including but not limited to cultural disposition, economic factors, physical environment, and the biological predisposition of an individual (Buttriss, 2013). Traditionally, the efforts to address the issue of malnutrition have been focused on related diseases. It is, however, worth noting that over the last couple of years, there has been a special focus on the issue of overnutrition, the major problem that the developed countries face.

Malnutrition is thought to be one of the major challenges facing health care today. This problem is especially prevalent in countries where a good proportion of the population lives below the poverty line. In most cases,



malnutrition is considered to emanate from lack of enough economic resources at the household level. The World Health Organization estimates that about twenty four thousand people across the world die every day due to malnutrition and general food insecurity (Holtz, Plitnick, & Friedman, 2012). The highest number of these cases involves children who are exposed to macronutrient deficiency. On the same note, thirty three percent of the world population do not consume enough micronutrients. This exposes them to the health risks including but not limited to poor pregnancy results, redundant physical and mental development, poor bone development, and premature deaths (Holtz, Plitnick, & Friedman, 2012).

## **REGULATORY GUIDELINES**

The World Health Organization (WHO) in collaboration with Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) has established some recommendations to guide dietary nutritional intake. These recommendations are revised every ten to fifteen years following new research evidence, and most countries rely on them in designing their domestic policies. Still, some countries use the recommendations as a baseline for setting their own dietary standards. Given the wide variety of nutrients required to satisfy daily health needs, the recommendations made by WHO and FAO are extensive and cannot be fully laid down in this paper owing to space limitation (WHO, n.d.). Nevertheless, these recommendations help countries around the world to set clinical significance levels for nutrients intake as a tool for monitoring public health. The recommendations are also used in assessing whether there is a deficiency (malnutrition) or

overnutrition in any given time and across regions. As such, these recommendations help in reviewing nutrient-related diseases and make policy reforms to address them whenever necessary.

As it was mentioned, the dietary/nutritional recommendations are subjected to periodical review based on a continued research process. In line with this, WHO and FAO have published different recommendation over the last years to cater for different dietary and nutritional requirements including trace elements, fats and oil, and carbohydrates (WHO, n.d.). New updates continue to be added to previous recommendations as well as new ones are established based on new evidence. As it would be expected, some of the recommendations address specific nutrients, while others addresses several of them at a time. It is important to mention that several factors are considered when making the recommendations. These include the function of the nutrients in the human body, their metabolism, required levels, dietary intake patterns, and the level of toxicity. Other factors include levels of tolerable upper intake, basal requirements, and safe intake level.

## **MORAL, LEGAL, AND ETHICAL ISSUES**

Despite the fact that many countries lack enough economic resources, access to nutritional diet is considered to be a human right under international standards. The organizations such as International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recognize freedom from hunger as basic human right. Every person has the right to access food either directly or by purchasing. This is also recognized under

standards set by the United Nations (UN) (Holtz, Plitnick, & Friedman, 2012). The right to access food is further associated with the right for dignity as spelled under Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In every sense, every person has the right to have adequate and consistent access to food regardless of age, gender, or any other discriminatory parameters.

## **HEALTHCARE PRODUCTIVITY AND ECONOMIC COSTS**

Malnutrition or overnutrition has been associated with a number of political, social, and economic costs. Besides widely known health costs, the lack of nutritional diet has been linked to reduced economic productivity and other ills such as stereotyping and bullying. For example, overnutrition in developed countries has been shown to be the major cause of diseases such as obesity, diabetes, and other coronary- and respiratory-related diseases (Buttriss, 2013). People affected by such diseases find it relatively difficult to engage in daily activities and mostly depend on other members of the society and state in general for their daily survival. In addition, the cases of bullying and eventual school dropout have been prevalent among children considered by their peers to be obese (Herman et al., 2014). Equally, there have been the cases of discrimination based on health wellbeing of people in relation to employment and health insurance. Added to health expenses associated with the management of malnutrition/overnutrition-related diseases, these costs have also a negative effect on the economic and social performance of the victims and the society in general.



## CONCLUSION

The access to nutritional diet is considered to be basic human right. This is despite the fact that most countries, especially the developing ones, lack enough economic resources and capacity to ensure that all members of the population have access to the recommended dietary intake. Global efforts have been initiated to identify the best solution to the roaming problem of food insecurity and sustainability, especially in the face of growing world population, global climatic changes, and prevalent rate of severe weather conditions. Working collaboratively through organizations such as WHO and FAO, the countries around the world recognize the need for prompt action for ensuring that both current and future generations have access to sustainable food supply.