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In this issue

Food and beverages containing pharmacologically active substances are consumed in many food cultures worldwide. This is often a consequence of the fact that the plants we eat not only contain nutrients but also have evolved to produce compounds that serve to assist the plant survive in an environment thick with herbivores. Coffee beans and the betel-nut are two of the most commonly consumed examples of plant-derived foodstuff that have effects that are more neurological than nutritional, with both widely suspected of having independent effects on health outcomes. In this issue, Fuhrman *et al.*⁽¹⁾ focus on the risk of incident diabetes associated with coffee intake in Puerto Rican men, with data suggesting a protective effect of coffee consumption.

In these times of global financial crisis, the paper by Darmon *et al.*⁽²⁾ that compares low-cost foods with brand-name equivalents in France is particularly relevant. While the authors acknowledge the difficulties in analysing the relationship between cost and quality of foodstuffs because of a lack of mandatory food labelling, their analysis does suggest that diverting consumers away from low-cost food options to more expensive brand-named foods is not justified on nutritional grounds.

Infants and children are particularly vulnerable to suboptimal nutrition and as a result are a common focus for nutrition research. Three papers in this issue focus on nutrition and growth-related issues amongst infants and children. Janjua *et al.*⁽³⁾ explore the determinants of low birth weight in urban Pakistan, Fausto *et al.*⁽⁴⁾ evaluate growth parameters of infants born to HIV-1-infected mothers in Brazil and Gera *et al.*⁽⁵⁾ report on a systematic review of the effect of combining multiple micronutrients with Fe supplements.

There has been a surge in the scrutiny applied to food industry advertising by the nutrition community, particularly that targeting children as a vulnerable group, with a number of studies already published in this journal in

past issues. Morgan *et al.*⁽⁶⁾ add to this debate in this issue via a paper that analyses British commercial television advertising of foods targeting children, with specific reference to oral health. Their findings suggest that there has been a shift away from advertising of confectionery to foods that might be considered healthier but contain large amounts of hidden sugar. This implies that scrutiny does lead to change in advertising practices, but not necessarily change resulting in the promotion of healthier food to children. It appears that further scrutiny is required, if not legislation.

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