



## Editorial

The journal is now in its 11th year; we look forward to another productive and challenging year ahead. Having been out of the role of editor-in-chief for a year I have had a little time to reflect on where I think we in the journal, and the public health nutrition community more broadly, should be focusing our efforts to make a difference.

First, for the journal. Communicating original research should continue to be a major part of our work. Since the journal began we have struggled with how much time and effort to devote to a more campaigning role. Most academics are not very comfortable with such a role, but it is increasingly recognised as being important. Those of us who are academics should remember that the journal isn't just for academics, but that it is for practitioners and other groups who are engaged in trying to make a difference, in applying knowledge and skills to achieve change. Sharing experience and intelligence must therefore be wider than original research papers in the traditional sense. We need to share experience as to what does and does not work to make a difference, and also to reflect and consider the wider social, environmental and political context in which behaviour is maintained or changed. I don't feel that we have sufficient input from the practitioner/professional/advocate sector of our readership. But how to encourage such contributions? The journal needs to be open and supportive of such communications, and to consider what sort of peer review and other support is required to facilitate greater engagement. Now that the journal is published monthly we should be better able to respond to topical issues.

Second, for the wider public health nutrition community. At the first World Congress in Public Health Nutrition in Barcelona, there was a strong feeling for the need for a new membership-based organisation to bring people from around the world together to help represent our collective interests. By the time you are reading this there will be a new membership-based organisation that will represent Public Health Nutrition on a worldwide scale. The purpose of the World Public Health Nutrition Association is to improve nutrition-related health and well-being worldwide by enhancing the effectiveness of public health nutrition locally, nationally and internationally. In particular, the purpose of the Association will be:

1. the development of an international professional and collegial association of practitioners and scientists in public health nutrition that will address nutrition-related population health and well-being;
2. the promotion of cooperation between those active in the field of public health nutrition to enhance the effectiveness of public health nutrition worldwide;
3. the promotion of training, research and leadership skills of public health nutrition researchers, trainers and practitioners;
4. capacity-building for public health nutrition practice and research to enhance scientific competence;
5. the provision of a forum for presentation and discussion of work, sharing best practice and exchanging ideas, knowledge and skills;
6. the constitution of an international voice for public health nutrition advocacy.

In establishing the new association the 14-person convening group that developed the constitution was determined to set the membership and management structure up in such a way that it is open and transparent, particularly in terms of declaration of competing interests. Thus to apply you need to submit a CV and declaration of interest form (see SCN website, <http://www.unsystem.org/scn/Default.asp>, for further details).

Why should you join and what difference will it make to you personally and public health nutrition more generally? As stated, the aim is to provide a forum where people can come together from around the world to help each other; on the one hand to develop effective career frameworks and structures, but also to lobby and strengthen at a political level decision-making that will lead to improvements in public health. It is not meant to be an 'old boys' club' for the privileged few who travel the world to meet and chat, but a genuine forum to share best practice and provide support for long-term sustainable systems and structures that will build capacity and competence to do things better than we are currently doing. Thus, it is believed that you as an individual member will feel supported by a larger community of people, and that your involvement will strengthen the capacity of public health nutrition to make a difference. If we bring people together our individual voices will be stronger, and more credible, both to inform and shape policy, but also to take responsibility for behaving professionally. If we can agree a code of best practice, work collectively and collegially, we can make a difference to the health of the most needy and vulnerable in the world. At present individual actors have a lot of influence on policy, but they do not necessarily reflect the wider consensual view on what is best and most effective.

We believe policy-makers will look to our new association as a source of sound advice and guidance, and importantly in engaging appropriately we will show that we can help solve problems.

When I reflect back on our efforts in The Nutrition Society to develop a professional structure to support public health nutrition, I believe we were naïve and too inward-looking in our approach. Although it was important to get our own house in order, it would have been much more effective if we had engaged more actively with employers and policy leaders to help them address the problems they had, i.e. to show that the skills we had

could actually make a difference to solve real problems, and that we were not just a club to support each other to get new shiny badges that made us feel good.

2008 is going to be a crucial year for our profession: if we don't engage more fully and effectively we will have missed a vital opportunity. I have said this before, but now it really is time to get serious: all of us, not just a few.

Barrie Margetts  
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## In this issue

### *Public Health Nutrition: a truly global journal*

Scholarly contributions in this issue demonstrate the genuinely global reach of the journal, with authors from the West Indies, Australia, the USA, Cost Rica, the Philippines, Cuba, Chile, South Africa and Oman. They not only reflect a broad geographical representation but also a diversity of research content relevant to public health nutrition practice and research at a global level.

Starting in Australia, Cox *et al.*<sup>(1)</sup> present results from a cross-sectional study exploring consumers' intentions to consume various forms of omega-3 fatty acids. Using data derived from computer-administered questionnaires on a community sample of 220 consumers, they report that consumers' perceived vulnerability to coronary heart disease had no effect on acceptance of genetically modified (GM) sources of omega-3 fatty acids. This study also suggests that even after education of the benefits of using GM sources of omega-3 fatty acids, there was no change in consumers' acceptance of these product options.

Continuing with this focus on fatty acids, Beydoun *et al.*<sup>(2)</sup> from the USA report on analysis of prospective cohort data from the Atherosclerosis Risk in Community (ARIC) study, to test a hypothesis that *n*-3 fatty acids can inhibit cognitive decline, particularly in middle-aged hypertensives. They provide evidence to support randomised control trials of diets rich in fatty acids of marine origin among this population group.

Moving east to Barbados, Gaskin *et al.*<sup>(3)</sup> report on a cross-sectional study of 400 schoolchildren (11–16 years of age) that explores the relationship between overweight and obesity and physical activity, with perceptions of

body size, health and diet quality. They provide further evidence to support the importance of cultural factors as promoters of adiposity. Adolescents in Norway are also the focus of a study by Bere *et al.*<sup>(4)</sup> that investigates the determinants of soft drink consumption in this population group. This study highlights a range of individual, socio-economic, environmental and cultural determinants of soft drink consumption that can be used to support intervention planning.

Micronutrient malnutrition continues to be a priority focus for assessment and intervention in many parts of the world. Macias-Matos *et al.*<sup>(5)</sup> present results from a nationwide study of 1191 Cuban children to assess vitamin A status and intake of vitamin-A-providing foods.

Boosting nutrient intakes via food fortification and supplementation remains a major strategic approach in many parts of the world where deficiency is highly prevalent. Mardones *et al.*<sup>(6)</sup> report on a non-blinded, randomised controlled study of the effects of a dairy product fortified with multiple micronutrients and omega-3 fatty acids on birth weight and gestation duration in pregnant Chilean women. Results indicate an increased mean birth weight. The effectiveness of dietary supplementation is critically dependent on compliance. Lutsey *et al.*<sup>(7)</sup> explore a range of variables associated with iron supplementation compliance in a sample of 346 pregnant women in the Philippines. This work provides insights for intervention planning that enhances supplementation compliance.

Three papers in this issue focus on validation testing of dietary intake assessment tools. Marcotte *et al.*<sup>(8)</sup> assess a calcium checklist for early elementary-school children,