

Editorial

Community nutrition: Application of nutrition science to promote the public's health and nutrition

Abolghassem Djazayeri

Editor-in-Chief

Community nutrition can be defined as a coordinated set of actions and services helping people to choose a healthy diet in terms of nutritional value and food safety to meet their physiological needs in any given social context. It encompasses a wide range of strategies and programs based on evidence generated through basic and epidemiological nutrition and food research. The ultimate goal is the prevention of malnutrition and promotion of nutritional and health situation of whole populations or population segments, e.g., age/gender groups, occupational groups such as agricultural and industrial workers, etc.

The core responsibility of community nutrition experts is knowledge translation — translating research results into action. They should, therefore, be knowledgeable in the areas of fundamental principles of nutrition, have a strong background in epidemiology, and be skilled in the art and science of communication, policy analysis, and leadership. Their specific professional responsibilities and functions would include assessment of the nutritional status of communities and its determinants; understanding food and nutrition behavior of people; public and

community nutrition education; designing, implementing and evaluating community nutrition intervention programs; and nutrition and nutrition-related services as part of public health services in the national health system.

Where do community nutrition professionals work/function? They can work and perform functions in government agencies (health centers, etc.), nutrition and food assistance programs, schools and nurseries (providing services and food and nutrition education), non-governmental organizations, and mass catering and group feeding centers.

In summary, based on ample evidence, community nutrition is one of the major strategies for promotion of the public's health and nutrition and, therefore, should receive adequate attention in national health plans and macro-policies. In line with this, universities should design special degree programs for training community and public health nutritionists.

Abolghassem Djazayeri

Editor-in-Chief, Department of Community Nutrition,
School of Nutritional Sciences and Dietetics,
Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran