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Editorial

Problems of Nutrition

by

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Nutrition is an international problem. There are many reasons why those who are attempting to build a unified world should start with health and nutrition. No political settlements have meaning for hungry people ; until they are fed, neither their minds nor their bodies are in a condition to contribute towards national development.

Better health and nutrition are real needs in a real world. If our neighbours have better health and nutrition, nothing can be taken away from us. In fact, we shall benefit, for there will be less danger of the spread of disease through our frontiers, and better nourished neighbours will become more prosperous and demand more of the goods we have to sell.

BOUDREAU

The problem of Nutrition in India is vast in scope and complicated in nature. It is needless to repeat that in order to ensure a satisfactory standard of physical fitness, it is necessary to provide an adequate and well-balanced diet for the people. In spite of the fundamental knowledge in our possession, we see the vast majority of our people suffering from anaemias of various degrees and in a state of poor growth and generalised under-nutrition ; a large percentage of our mothers and children suffer from a state of "hidden hunger"—a state of sub-clinical sub-nutrition. On the border line of disease, these unfortunate people have poor resistance to the physical strains of life and disease. Recent investigations in the country have demonstrated that there is a widespread prevalence of protein malnutrition amongst the infants and children of the lower socio-economic groups in both urban and rural areas ;

Dr. S. R. Sengupta who is the Director of School Health and Nutrition, Bengal, addressed the Conference at Calcutta on the subject of Nutrition, when he was bombarded with questions from the floor.

We have invited Dr. Sengupta to be our Guest Editor this month to introduce one of the important features of our 1957 issue : *Nutrition for Nurses*—Ed.

Kwashiorkor—a condition due to unsatisfactory weaning practices and lack of suitable supplementary foods in later stages of infancy and early childhood, deserves further investigation. Chronic gastro-intestinal disorders, specific lesions in the skin, tongue and muco-cutaneous junctions, and defective vision amongst the vulnerable groups of people, are due to varying degrees of deficiency of protective nutrients in their diet.

Superimposed upon this deplorable

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lack of sufficient quantities of good quality protective foods, and the essential nutrients of high biological value—there are certain other factors complicating our problems. These are : poor earning capacity of the individual ; ignorance among the average person of the basic principles of nutrition ; apathy, social prejudice, poor food habits, and age-old conventions of defective methods of cooking.

We must not forget that poor cattle health and defective nutrition of the soil in different parts of the country, are also important factors further complicating matters. Apart from these we are aware that there are a number of diseases directly or indirectly influenced by nutritional factors—which still require to be controlled and tackled by proper planning measures. These include Endemic Goitre prevalent in the sub-Himalyan regions ; *Lathyrism* associated with consumption of *Khesari Dal*, fluorosis in Andhra and Hyderabad ; and osteomalacia in Northern India.

It is now realised by the clinicians that many conditions of ill-defined ill-health, and those of obscure aetiology are due to a certain degree of specific dietary deficiency. The time has come when it is necessary to study the nutritional requirements of the infective agents responsible for particular diseased processes

in the human being, in the light of therapeutic dietetics. Further patient and laborious investigations will have to be undertaken before the relative importance of nutrition, heredity and environment as factors in the incidence of disease, and in the promotion of sound health, is fully understood.

Meanwhile we can do a good deal to improve the nutritional status of our people. We can choose the right kind of food many of which are cheap and nutritious ; we can adjust the cooking methods in order to conserve the nutritive value of the food ; and we can plan our daily menu keeping in view the special needs of the vulnerable groups of the population like the pregnant and nursing mothers, the infants and the growing children. The time is here when we should appreciate, *and teach*, people that fresh green vegetables, fruit, milk, eggs, fish and meat are not luxuries, but that these constitute the essentials of a well balanced diet.

Your *Journal* is planning to carry a series of articles on Nutrition that should prove helpful to nurses in their plans to spread information about Nutrition. Nurses are in an advantageous position to both teach and demonstrate good eating habits, as well as to teach scientific Nutrition.

We Are Pioneers

by

T. Basappa R.N.

Student in Psychiatric Nursing

"Oh ! you will become mad if you work in a mental hospital" ! "Is training necessary to look after insane persons ?... These are some of the remarks made by some nurses working in general hospitals.

Before going into some of my ex-

periences during my training, I would like to write a few lines regarding some misconceptions about mental illness and mental hospitals. Let alone the layman, many medical men do not know much about the modern concept of mental