

## In this issue

# Climate change and the public health nutrition agenda

The lead editorial in this issue<sup>(1)</sup> challenges our discipline to keep consideration of the environment central to public health nutrition research and practice, not only in terms of how the environment impacts on nutrition and health but how humans impact on the environment. Climate change is being described in the lay media as one of the biggest challenges facing humankind. It has numerous obvious and many potential impacts on public health nutrition, including the exacerbation of food insecurity in some regions, loss of habitable and farming land to flood, encroachment of the sea and desertification of farmland. But how has the global debate about climate change and its potential effects been integrated into public health nutrition debate?

In this issue, Sulda *et al.*<sup>(2)</sup> present a framework to guide action in the public health nutrition workforce to develop policies and practices addressing factors contributing to climate change. Consultative research among key informants and a sample of the public health nutrition workforce in Australia demonstrated that although addressing climate change was considered a valid role and issue for nutritionists, there was little support for programme development to address climate change among the workforce. This suggests that this workforce has a way to go in terms of integrating into practice the rhetoric of climate change mitigation.

### Persistence of iodine deficiency

The iodisation of salt is a widely used public health strategy in countries with problems with iodine-deficiency disorders. Yadav *et al.*<sup>(3)</sup> in this issue present a cross-sectional study describing the persistence of severe iodine-deficiency disorders despite universal salt iodisation in iodine-deficient areas in northern India. They report that persistent iodine-deficiency disease in pockets of the population despite universal salt iodisation is attributable to poor coverage, the use of unpackaged crystal salt with inadequate iodine and the widespread washing of salt as major causes. Importantly, they make recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of the universal salt iodisation programme.

### Fat chickens and leaf concentrate

The perception that chicken is a leaner and healthier option to other meats available in supermarkets in rich countries appears to be modern fallacy. In the mid-1970s, dietary guidance in the UK recommended eating more poultry and less fatty red meats in an attempt to improve dietary fat intakes. A paper by Wang *et al.*<sup>(4)</sup> in this issue, which presents data on the nutritional composition of modern organic and broiler chickens sold for human consumption in the UK, suggests that this guidance is now inappropriate.

Challenging areas of practice, such as the delivery of supplemental Fe and folate among anaemic adolescents, requires innovation and lateral thinking. The use of leaf concentrate as an alternative to Fe and folic acid supplements is reported in this issue by Vyas *et al.*<sup>(5)</sup> as an effective and more palatable alternative.

Both of these studies and the broader climate change debate reinforce the need to keep evaluating the appropriateness of dietary guidance in terms of new knowledge and innovations, practical feasibility and environmental impacts and sustainability.

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### References

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