



NNEdPro Global Centre for Nutrition and Health

Improving health through medical nutrition knowledge

2017 Events:

- 2nd Summer School in Applied Human Nutrition - 28th-31st July
- 3rd International Summit in Medical Nutrition Education and Research - 1st & 2nd August

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The Renaissance of the Mediterranean Diet

While people around the world celebrated St Valentine's Day with chocolates and sweets, NNEdPro celebrated at the Vatican by discussing the significance of the Mediterranean Diet in today's century. Renowned speakers from a broad range of backgrounds, including the scientific community, media, politics, food production, culinary arts and education, gathered at The Pontifical Academy of Sciences to discuss and debate food! Well, more precisely how we value food in today's industrial and commercial lifestyle.

There is mounting evidence on the beneficial role of nutritional factors in the aetiology of common diseases, such as cardiovascular and neoplastic diseases. In particular, the Mediterranean diet has been extensively reported to be associated with favourable health outcomes and better quality of life. However, recent data indicate that adherence to this eating pattern is decreasing, particularly among children. Modern societies are experiencing falling food costs due to increased availability and industrialisation, leading to a declining perception of the value of food. This conference aimed to encourage us to **acknowledge the link between natural, sustainable food and health that is more in line with cultural traditions**: In other words, to 'reset' our dietary paradigm by replacing our reliance on convenience and the industrial scale processing of foods with an ethos that values food as a central and integral part of our cultural and communal experience.

The case for the Mediterranean diet

The scene of the conference was set by Dr David Katz, Founding Director of the Yale Prevention Research Centre, who presented an appraisal of the importance of diet and lifestyle in preventing chronic disease and early mortality in populations. Presentations from Prof Francesco Sofi, Florence University, and Prof Antonia Trichopoulou followed highlighting the large breadth and depth of evidence that demonstrate the effectiveness of 'heritage' diets, such as the Mediterranean diet, in their capacity to reduce the incidence of chronic disease, further encouraging the integration of such diets back into our lifestyle. Further research into micronutrient composition of common foods reveals the alarming reduction in nutrient quality frequently seen with modern agricultural and production methods. Concerns were expressed by all contributors that world populations are moving away from sustainable and diverse plant-based patterns of eating, aligned with the Mediterranean diet, to diets with a much higher consumption of meat, sugar and processed ingredients, further reducing the nutritional value of many staple foods.

From health and heritage to our modern world

Giorgio Locatelli, London chef and patron, described his experience as a chef and shared that the most important part of his childhood was growing up with food as part of his social experience. He described initiatives that involved having chefs in schools and prisons to help educate the next generation in healthy eating. This theme was further developed by Greg Drescher, Culinary Institute of America, and Jean-Xavier Guinard, Davis University, who showed that healthy meals can easily be achieved by making very small changes to recipes and introducing healthier ingredients. Sara Baer-Sinnott, President of Oldways, further emphasised the importance of educating health professionals, students and the public about plant-based 'heritage diets' and the need to re-adopt this eating behaviour in modern living. Thus, there is clearly a huge push for integrating 'heritage diets' into our everyday lives.

Call for action

What can we do to help and 'reset' our dietary behaviour? Here are three calls for action presented by our contributors:

Prof Daniele Del Rio

NNEdPro Scientific Director | Associate Professor of Human Nutrition, University of Parma

Provide evidence-based nutrition education with nutrition teaching a mandatory part of school and college education. Thus making future leaders and communities more competent in nutrition and healthy eating.

Fabrice DeClerk

EAT Science Director

Protect human health and the environment from the damage inflicted by modern food production methods and consumption patterns, re-focus on the benefits known to exist in traditional dietary patterns like the Mediterranean diet.

Dr Simon Poole

Physician | Author | NNEdPro Senior Collaborator

Encourage governments to provide a commitment, including introducing legislation, to begin a renaissance in the value we place on our food; to rediscover the healthy and sustainable ways of heritage diets such as the Mediterranean diet

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