
Title : The nutritional status of population in India

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The nutritional status of a population is an important health indicator. Whether the status is one of under nutrition or excessive intake of energy, both lead to far reaching health consequences. Assessing the food consumption patterns and estimating the nutrient intakes and comparing these with the recommended daily intakes / RDI or RDA is an essential and periodic exercise of the national nutrition monitoring bureau (NNMB) of ICMR. Time trends have shown the direction in which the nutrition status has been shifting with supportive evidence from the incidence and prevalence of nutrition associated disorders like Non communicable diseases(NCD's). Strategies to combat malnutrition and micronutrient inadequacies are based on such data.

There has been a steady decline in infant mortality, maternal mortality, under five malnutrition, stunting, wasting, micronutrient deficiencies etc. due to the govt. programs and interventions like fortification, mid day meals, ICDS etc. However there is still a large population of children, pregnant mothers, lactating mothers and elderly who are yet to improve.

With progressive decrease in physical activity and changing lifestyles in rural and urban India, over weight, Obesity, type2 Diabetes, Hypertension, Cardio vascular disease and several such problems have shown a rapid upward trend. Together with under nutrition these have constituted the "Double Burden". New data indicate that the population with NCDs are mostly the same population who were once undernourished. The origins of these diseases seems to be right from the embryonic and fetal stages. Interventions should now be directed towards preventing the fetal origins and preventing the generation-to-generation propagation of nutrition related disorders.

Even when energy deficiency and protein deficiency were showing a downward trend micronutrient deficiencies persisted. The prevalence of iron, vitamin A, folic acid deficiency are as high as 70% in the population. Recent data from all sources have highlighted the rising prevalence of vitamin B12 and Vitamin D deficiencies. Micronutrient deficiencies are seen across all socioeconomic groups. Immediate solution is to fortify food and promote diversified food intakes for better nutrition in the long term.

Lifestyle diseases are now contributing to almost 60% of all cause mortality. WHO has recommended reduction in saturated fat, free sugars and salt and a total elimination of trans fat. Physical activity is now an integral part of nutritional rehabilitation and increasing the levels of activity has to be always combined with nutrition interventions in combating NCD's.