

Pediatric Malnutrition

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I found it difficult to decide what health issue to focus on for this project. This is probably the only time I will ever create a web site devoted to providing information about a health issue, so I wanted the topic to make an impact. I decided to focus on the issue on pediatric malnutrition because it is such a serious problem and because with a minimal amount of effort it is possible to make enduring improvements.

Arguably, the world's population is more prosperous today than in any other time in history. People all over the world enjoy greater material wealth than ever before. However, even with all of this material wealth, it is estimated that one billion people around the world suffer from hunger and malnutrition. Over three fourths of these people are children under the age of 5. (www.savethechildren.org)

Today about 24,000 people will die from hunger or hunger-related causes. The same will happen tomorrow, the next day and every day until we do something to help. On top of those 24,000 people who die, there are many more suffering from the many impairments that malnutrition can cause. (www.savethechildren.org)

Many people are under the impression that these hunger related deaths are caused by political strife and wars, but in reality only about 10% of these deaths can be contributed to these causes. The majority of hunger deaths are caused by chronic malnutrition resulting from extreme poverty and the inability to get an adequate amount of food. (<http://www.nutrition.org.uk/>)

Great improvements have been made to prevent malnutrition in the past years. Improvements are often relatively cheap, easy to do and have far reaching and long lasting effects.

Malnutrition is literally “bad nourishment”. It results from a lack of food as well as too much food, the wrong types of food, and the body's response to a wide range of infections that result in malabsorption of nutrients or the inability to use nutrients properly. Malnutrition is characterized by inadequate or excess intake of protein, energy and micronutrients, such as vitamins and frequent infections and disorders. (<http://www.nutrition.org.uk/>)

Malnutrition has several primary causes. Hunger is the most common cause. Hunger is defined as a deficiency of calories and protein, and is most often caused by poverty. Hunger can have irreversible effects on children, affecting their mental and physical development. The impairment of development leads to a cycle of poverty because it produces adults with less access to opportunities in education and employment. It is estimated that over 1.2 billion people suffer from malnutrition caused by hunger. www.globnut.net

Another cause of malnutrition is micronutrient and/or protein deficiency. This occurs when people do not receive adequate amounts of vitamins and minerals, micronutrients, or the correct proportion of protein. Over-consumption, or taking in many more calories than required, is another cause of malnutrition. Over-consumption leads to obesity and reduced physical activity and productivity. www.globnut.net

Largely because of malnutrition, 10% of children in developing countries don't live until the age of five. Malnutrition's other effects include impaired vision, inactivity, stunted growth and greatly increased susceptibility to disease. Malnutrition makes it extremely difficult for people to perform even the most basic tasks required in their every day lives. (www.globnut.net)

The vast majority of people living in hunger live in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, but even in industrialized countries like America and Britain, people remain food insecure. The term food insecure refers to people being hungry or unsure of the availability of future meals. About one third of the food insecure, roughly 12 million people, in America are children. (www.savethechildren.org)

Even in America, where there is assistance available for people struggling to find food there are startling statistics. For example, 9% of households receiving food from emergency agencies report that children have missed meals in the past month because they lacked food or the means to obtain food.

Those who have studied malnutrition believe that the best way to help reduce hunger is through education. Their hope is that with education people will be able to end the cycle of poverty that causes the continuation of hunger.

My hope is that by producing an informational website I can help to educate people about how to help alleviate the problem of pediatric malnutrition. People should know that simple provisions could enable impoverished people to become

self-sufficient. Effective and clean water systems, along with seeds to plant and information about farming techniques could transform a suffering society.

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