

Voyaging On in Search of Evidence to Benefit the Nutrition Community

III World Congress on Public Health Nutrition

Noel W Solomons

CESSIAM, Guatemala City, Guatemala

With the central theme of “Public Health Nutrition: The Core of International Development for Cooperation,” the III World Congress on Public Health Nutrition (III WCPHN) was held November 9–12, 2014, in Las Palmas, Gran Canaria, Spain. The previous WCPHNs had been held in Barcelona in 2006 and Oporto in 2010. The President of the Congress and Chair of the International Scientific Committee was Prof. Lluís Serra-Majem. Eight hundred and forty-eight participants from 62 countries attended the meeting. The program comprised a total of 180 hours of activities, including plenary lectures, symposia, workshops, debates, and oral and poster presentations, along with a social program featuring the culinary and performing-arts culture of the Canary Islands. Tributes were offered to the memories of the late Nevin S Scrimshaw, José María Bengoa and Rainer Gross. A focus on the younger generation of the nutrition community was reflected in a satellite reunion assembly of professionals who had been part of the Nutritional Leadership Programs in Europe, Africa, South Asia and Latin America.

Hidden hunger in the “First World”

For the readership of *Sight and Life*, micronutrients would probably be of leading interest; the Program offered seven sessions focused in this arena. This began with the Inaugural Lecture, presented by Prof. Hans Konrad Biesalski of Hohenheim University in Stuttgart, with the provocative title of “Hidden Hunger in the ‘First World’ – how is economic crisis affecting undernutrition?” The speaker provided examples from iron, folate and

vitamin A as problem nutrients in affluent populations, linking these to the recent economic crisis. It underscored the lessons that higher-income nations can learn from their less economically developed counterparts.

Three Plenary Symposia continued the micronutrient theme. “Cost-effectiveness of market-driven fortification to address Hidden Hunger” presented the economic modeling of the benefits of investing adequate vitamin A and iron nutrition in health and productivity. “How can phytase improve public health nutrition?” focused on experimental animal and human data on how enzymes that degrade dietary phytate can improve the bioavailability of iron and zinc and improve growth. Third in the series was “Folate-preventable congenital anomalies: using the WHO research strategy to guide effective actions in public health.”

III Rainer Gross Prize awarded to Prof. David Thurnham

Satellite symposia were directly sponsored. DSM Nutritional Products presented “Vitamin E: New emerging data – the way forward,” which highlighted new evidence making this vitamin relevant to global public health. The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) sponsored “The challenges of interventions against micronutrient deficiency” featuring the efforts and obstacles in rolling out an effective fortification agenda. The Puleva Nutrition Institute sponsored a Spanish-language symposium, “Vitamins, bone and public health,” which went beyond vitamin D to other fat-soluble vitamins of relevance to skeletal health. Finally, the III Rainer Gross Prize was awarded to Prof. David Thurnham for his work on the awareness of how inflammation distorts the assessment of micronutrient status.

The Program endeavored to examine evidence surrounding contemporary and unresolved issues of health relevance, such



Panel discussion at the III World Congress on Public Health Nutrition. From left to right: Rosario Garcia (on podium), Klaus Schuemann, Noel Solomons, David Thurnham and Ursula Gross.

as childhood obesity, artificial sweeteners, sugar consumption, physical activity, the Mediterranean diet and human hydration. Other sessions addressed research financing, research quality, leadership and opportunities for public-private initiatives. The debate program highlighted controversies in both an entertaining and informative manner; the themes were: **1)** “Taxing foods as public health measure”; **2)** “Experiments or observations”; and **3)** “Wine versus beer”.

.....
“The Program endeavored to examine evidence surrounding contemporary and unresolved issues of health relevance”

On a historical note, the expeditions of Christopher Columbus would break their journey in the Canary Islands as the last supply stopover prior to continuing their voyage westwards in discovery of the unknown. In this context, an announcement from the Congress President is worthy of attention. Prof. Serra-

Majem commented: “I am also proud to announce this new integrative and rigorous organization: The International Association of Community Nutrition (IACON), which will be constructing an international and interdisciplinary framework to help coordinate evidence-based, sustainable solutions for the most important nutritional-related diseases and conditions worldwide.” IACON and its Congresses are dedicated to the premise that nutritional science is the centerpiece for the necessary new discoveries that will improve public health nutrition policy and programs. We departed the Canary Islands, therefore, to continue our respective journeys toward obtaining the relevant evidence to benefit the nutrition of communities and nations around the globe.

.....
Correspondence: Noel W Solomons
Center for Studies of Sensory Impairment, Aging and Metabolism, CeSSIAM in Guatemala, P.O. Box 02-5339, Section 3163/Guatemala, Miami, FL 33102-5339, USA
E-mail: cessori@guate.net.gt
