



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ON NUTRITIONAL STATUS OF HUMANS

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Abstract:

A healthy population is dependent on a healthy environment. The nutritional status of populations depends to a great extent on environmental conditions. Environmental health is that aspect of public health which is concerned with all the factors, circumstances and conditions in the environment or surroundings of humans that is air, water, land, housing etc. that can exert an influence on human health and well being. Environmental health consists of preventing or controlling disease, injury, and disability related to the interactions between people and their environment. The Environment & Health service provides a good cooperation between the environmental and the health policy area. It is responsible for structuring, preparing and implementing a policy directed towards avoiding the negative health effects of environmental pollution. Particular attention is given to vulnerable groups, such as children and elderly people. Nutrition is an important environmental factor that influences health and well being of people. Consumption of adequate diet both in quality and quantity is important for maintenance of good nutritional status. Human health has always been threatened by natural hazards such as storms, floods, fires, landslides and droughts. Their consequences are being worsened by a lack of preparedness. For the precautionary measures the environmental policies should be renewed and the existing policies should be implemented strictly to save the quality life of human beings.

Keywords: *nutritional status, environmental health, environmental policies*

Introduction:

The nutritional status of populations depends to a great extent on environmental conditions. The relationship between nutrition and environment was taken into account in the conceptual framework introduced by UNICEF in the early 90s. In this framework environment was depicted as an important causal factor for disease, leading to malnutrition. Environment encompassing soil degradation, global warming, waste disposal and other factors has far more pervasive implications for the biosystem nutrition (Gross R. and Solomons N.).





Humans interact with the environment constantly. These interactions affect quality of life, years of healthy life lived, and health disparities. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines environment, as it relates to health, as “all the physical, chemical, and biological factors external to a person and all the related behaviors” (WHO, 2006). Environmental health consists of preventing or controlling disease, injury, and disability related to the interactions between people and their environment (www.healthypeople.gov/2020).

A clean environment is essential for human health and well-being. However, the interactions between the environment and human health are highly complex and difficult to assess. The best-known health impacts are related to ambient air pollution, poor water quality and insufficient sanitation. Today Noise is also an emerging environment and health issue. Climate change, depletion of stratospheric ozone, loss of biodiversity, and land degradation can also affect human health (www.eea.europa.eu/themes/human).

Poor air quality is linked to premature death, cancer, and long-term damage to respiratory and cardiovascular systems. Decreasing air pollution is an important step in creating a healthy environment. Surface and ground water quality applies to both drinking water and recreational waters. Contamination by infectious agents or chemicals can cause mild to severe illness. Water quality is an important global challenge. Diseases can be reduced by improving water quality and sanitation and increasing access to adequate water and sanitation facilities. Protecting water sources and minimizing exposure to contaminated water sources are important parts of environmental health. People spend most of their time at home, work places, or schools. The hazards can impact health and safety. Maintaining healthy homes and communities is essential to environmental health (www.healthypeople.gov/2020).

Environmental health is important in Maintaining a healthy environment is central to increasing quality of life and years of healthy life. Globally, nearly 25 percent of all deaths and the total disease burden can be attributed to environmental factors (WHO, 2006). Environmental factors are





diverse and far reaching. These include the exposure to hazardous substances in the air, water, soil, and food, natural and technological disasters, physical hazards, nutritional deficiencies. Poor environmental quality has its greatest impact on people whose health status is already at risk. Therefore, environmental health must address the societal and environmental factors that increase the likelihood of exposure and disease (www.healthypeople.gov/2020).

Because of the permanent interaction between man and his environment, our health is to a considerable extent determined by the environmental quality. As a consequence, environment and health are closely related. The environment in which we live, work and relax, is determining for our health and well-being. Physical, as well as chemical and biological factors in the environment can have repercussions on our health, both physically and mentally and it affects the nutritional status of the individuals.

The World Health Organization's (WHO) definition of health emphasizes the physical, mental and social well-being: "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity". Health is considered as an overall concept reaching beyond the absence of illness and ailments. Well-being and quality of life are subject to an impressive number of factors, including psychological, social and environment-related aspects. Our health is to a large extent determined by the quality of our environment, both indoor and outdoor.

The impact on our health not only involves the consequences of air, ground and water pollution, but also other factors, such as genetic susceptibility, food contamination, radiation, life style and life quality. When analyzing relations between environment and health, it is of vital importance to consider a broader definition of "environment" not only the quality of the air, water and ground, but also indoor air quality, food and the living and working environment need to be taken into account. The Environment & Health service provides a good cooperation between the environmental and the health policy area. It is responsible for structuring, preparing and implementing a policy directed towards avoiding the negative health effects





of environmental pollution. Particular attention is given to vulnerable groups, such as children and elderly people.

Nutrition is an important environmental factor that influences health and well being of people. Consumption of adequate diet both in quality and quantity is important for maintenance of good nutritional status. Agricultural production that determines food availability is therefore an important determinant of food consumption. Food production in India has increased substantially over the years. One of the major achievements in the last 50 years has been the Green Revolution and self sufficiency in food production. After fulfilling the needs of the population the extra agricultural production need to be stored or secured in a proper advanced storage area.

Nutrition as an outcome of food security is vulnerable to environmental degradation because access to food is a function of the physical environment. Drought and soil erosion often accompanied by social conflict may seriously disrupt production and acquisition strategies and, therefore, threaten food availability and access. These shocks often lead to a loss of productive assets, e.g. livestock. They also have severe implications for the future productive potential of households and their long-term food security (Conrad M.E. 1966).

Two factors that have an immediate impact on nutrition are dietary intake and health status. Increased food access will not necessarily improve food utilization when other factors, such as health or social environment, are not favorable (Martinez-C.and Layrissse M. 1971). Appropriate care for mothers and children, other vulnerable groups, access to health services, and a healthy environment (e.g. sanitation facilities; potable water, health care etc.) are often the missing links to adequate nutrition at the household and individual level.

Food accessibility is ensured when households and all individuals within those households have adequate resources to obtain appropriate foods for a nutritious diet. Household access to food primarily depends on home production, household income and food prices. Income and prices are special concerns in urban areas where home food production for consumption is low (Conrad M.E. 1966).





Environmental health is a dynamic and evolving field. While not all complex environmental issues can be predicted (Kinney P.L. 2008 and Patz J. et al. 2005). Human health has always been threatened by natural hazards such as storms, floods, fires, landslides and droughts. Their consequences are being worsened by a lack of preparedness and by human actions such as deforestation, climate change and biodiversity loss (www.eea.europa.eu/themes/human).

Conclusion:

Environmental health is that aspect of public health which is concerned with all the factors, circumstances and conditions in the environment or surroundings of humans that is air, water, land, housing etc. that can exert an influence on human health and well being. Poor environmental quality is responsible for up to 10 % of all deaths in the world (Gupta P.2010). The vulnerable sections of the community easily get affected by these factors as they are already weak. Pregnant women if not nourished well with healthy food the outcome of it the new borne baby will be malnourished. There is a long chain of interdependent factors which influence the nutritional status of the population. To control these factors the implementation of the environmental laws is essential. It will help to change the present picture of the country.

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