



THE EARLY NUTRITION PROGRAMMING PROJECT

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Acronym: EARNEST

**** Media Release ****

Wednesday 13th December 2006

Rapid growth in the first 6 months of life may not be 'Best for Baby'

The new science of Early Nutrition Programming unravels the impact of nutrition of mother & baby on risk of serious health problems in later life

A Review of the latest evidence concerning 'early nutrition programming' of adult health risk, during pregnancy and infancy, concludes that nutrition intake 0-6 months is critical in increasing or decreasing this risk, and may be more important than nutrition in the womb.

"The concept that it is postnatal, rather than prenatal, growth is a more robust predictor of later adult disease is supported by findings from intervention studies," states Professor Mike Symonds in his presentation on the EARNEST project at the Nutrition Society meeting (Cambridge, 13 December 2006).

Manipulation of the diet of mother rats during lactation has been shown to increase or decrease blood pressure in offspring. Additionally rate of growth during the lactation period (when mothers have their diet altered) and the resulting adaptation of tissue can amplify, or protect, against the likelihood of disease in later life.

Strong relationships have been demonstrated between the rate of postnatal growth and development of the 'metabolic syndrome' where abdominal obesity is co-terminus with diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol and an increased risk of atherosclerosis and heart disease.

Babies of the lowest birth-weight who subsequently gain weight rapidly may be at the greatest risk.

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***** EARLY NUTRITION PROGRAMMING *****

What is it?

The science of understanding how and why the food eaten by pregnant women and by baby in infancy affects the life-long health of the child

What do we know already?

Nutrition in the womb and infancy and birth-weight implicated in up to 50% of adult disease - heart disease, diabetes, obesity, bone health, impaired immune & gut functions all implicated.

What's happening in Cambridge?

- Celebration of the life and work of Dr Elsie Widdowson (Wed 13 Dec – part of the Nutrition Society Annual Meeting)
- Gathering of Nutrition Scientists & Practitioners from the UK & Europe (Thurs/Fri 14/15 Dec) to share and discuss Early Nutrition Programming latest developments within the EARNEST Research Consortium.

***** EARNEST*****

The EARNEST Research Consortium (The Early Nutrition Programming Project ENPP) funded by the European Commission brings together a multi-disciplinary team of scientists from European research institutions in an integrated programme of work including experimental studies in humans, modern prospective observational studies; and mechanistic animal work including physiological studies, cell culture models and molecular techniques. The ENPP consortium consists of a multi-disciplinary team of 40 partners (33 academic institutions, 3 industry, 4 small/medium-sized enterprises) in 17 EU countries with a coordinating centre in Munich. The project commenced in April 2005 and runs for 5 years. Detailed briefing paper available on request.

EARNEST's first Scientific Congress will be held in Budapest 20/21st April 2007 - www.metabolic-programming.org

**Call Minerva PR to set up interviews and access more information:
+44 (0) 1264 710428 / +44 (0) 7887 714957**

rhonda.smith1@btinternet.com