

MEDIA RELEASE

Early Nutrition Programming Symposium, Granada 23 April 2008

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New insights into brain development offer potential for improving health and happiness of future generations

Remarkable new research into the way environmental factors affect the development of the brain has opened up the possibility that an infant's future mental abilities and susceptibility to mental illness can be permanently altered by dietary changes in early life.

Evidence that changes in early diet can have long term effects on brain structure, verbal IQ, eyesight, appetite regulation and possibly on neurodevelopmental outcome will be presented at the international symposium on Early Nutrition Programming in Granada, Spain (23 April).

This is an area of research in which the EC is investing heavily as it offers huge potential in terms of improving the health and reducing health care costs of future generations. Neuropsychiatric disorders, such as depression, are the second most important cause of ill health in the EU after cardiovascular disease¹. The EC has already invested over €13 million in the Early Nutrition Programming Project (EARNEST) and has now committed another €6 million into the NUTRIMENTHE project (launched 22April 2008).

NUTRIMENTHE will build on the work of EARNEST by addressing key issues in mental health where early diet could play a role, for example, perception, memory, intelligence, anxiety, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), depression and other related areas.

The Granada International Symposium will bring together researchers from both the Early Nutrition Programming Project (EARNEST) and NUTRIMENTHE to present their recent findings on the way in which early diet affects long term health. In addition to sessions on brain development and mental performance, other sessions will discuss the impact of early diet on later obesity and insulin resistance and on immune function.

The final session will be devoted to what new mothers think about these ideas and the extent to which they are reflected in nutrient recommendations for infants in Europe. **ENDS/**

1. The WHO European Health Report, 2005 <http://www.euro.who.int/ehr2005>

Co-ordinators Professor Berthold Koletzko (EARNEST Munich), Professor Cristina Campoy (Nutrimenthe Granada) & key Symposium speakers available for interview.

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