

# Preface

The first edition of *Nutritional Health* was published in 2001, and the second edition in 2006. During this first decade of the twenty-first century much water has flown under the bridge of the advancing river that is nutrition research and practice. At the same time huge numbers of new foods are continually appearing in supermarkets, while hundreds of new “breakthrough” diet and health books are published every year. With these large accumulations of developments in the field of nutrition, the need for a new edition of this book is obvious.

During the last century of nutritional advancement, we have frequently been faced with great opportunities that were brilliantly disguised as insoluble problems. Perhaps we are biased but in our eyes problems associated with nutrition are among the most exciting of those in the life sciences. How many other branches of the life sciences offer the promise of slashing the burden of human disease by one third or more?

With a scattering of brilliant exceptions until the 1970s few gave serious consideration to the notion that our diet plays an important role in such chronic diseases as heart disease and cancer. Today, we have a vastly greater understanding of the role of diet in disease; we know, for example, how meat affects colon cancer, how fish fats affect heart disease, and how vitamin D affects osteoporosis. Now, in the early years of the twenty-first century, our vastly improved nutrition knowledge gives us the capability of preventing a sizable fraction of the chronic diseases that afflict the people of our world, but only if we can fully inform its populace about these discoveries.

Ironically, despite overwhelming evidence that nutrition has such enormous potential to improve human well-being—at modest cost and using the knowledge we already have—it still fails to receive the resources it merits. Growth in funding for nutrition research and education remains stunted. By contrast, countless millions of dollars are spent on the glamor areas of biomedical research, such as genetic engineering and gene therapy. But we already know that our genes can only explain a fraction of our disease burden. Even if gene therapy reaches its full potential, it seems most improbable that it will ever achieve a quarter of what nutrition can do for us today.



<http://www.springer.com/978-1-61779-893-1>

Nutritional Health

Strategies for Disease Prevention

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2012, XXII, 562 p., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-1-61779-893-1

A product of Humana Press