

ORIGINAL RESEARCH COMMUNICATIONS

Nutrition monitoring of Russian schoolchildren in a period of economic change: a World Health Organization multicenter survey, 1992-1995

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Annual surveys of the food intakes and nutritional status of schoolchildren (aged 10 and 15 y) in a Moscow district were conducted in 1992-1995, a period of rapid economic transformation in Russia. Food intake was assessed through use of two 24-h recalls. A few socioeconomic variables-parental educational level, family size, participation in organized sports, and use of school breakfast and lunch options-were included in the dietary interview. Nutritional status was assessed by measurement of height and weight and comparison with international standards. There was a slight difference in the food pattern in the two age groups and some differences between boys and girls. Milk and other dairy products, fruit, juices, and vegetables were consumed in small quantities and relatively infrequently. Bread and bread products, porridge, confectionery, and meat and meat products were consumed more frequently and in larger quantities. Protein contributed approximately 12% and fat 29-32% of dietary energy. About 70% of the subjects had low intakes of riboflavin and calcium compared with reference values. Mean nutrient intakes did not change significantly during the study period. During the first 3 y of the study period, there was a nonsignificant overall decrease in height and weight but this was within the limits of normal variation.

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TITLE: Kazakhstan's medical community considers new strategies for its workforce

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The role of the "middle-level" health-care specialists in Kazakhstan's medical community was the topic of debate at the First Congress of Nurses and Pharmacists in Astana, Kazakhstan, on May 11- 12.

Among delegates at this key fixture in Kazakhstan's health-care calendar were representatives from various nursing associations, medical universities, and nursing colleges from Russia, central Asia, and other neighbouring countries. The congress aimed to define priorities and objectives for the country's middle-level health specialists, such as nurses, midwives, feldshers (doctors' assistants), and pharmacists, and to develop a nursing strategy in Kazakhstan during the country's current transition period.

Currently, about 105 000 middle-level specialists provide health care in Kazakhstan, 34.3% of whom work in primary health care. In spite of these numbers, the status of such professions is low; nursing is still not recognised as an independent profession; and physicians dominate the decision-making process in health policy. Physicians also hold the main posts, such as college dean, in nursing colleges and other nursing institutions.

There is a lack of appropriately educated training staff or competent leaders in the nursing profession. The proportion of physicians to nurses is 1:2 in Kazakhstan compared with 1:5-1:7 in developed countries. Another problem is that many nurses are leaving health-care work because of the low prestige of the profession and the extremely low salary of about US\$30 per month.

Congress participants noted that there is a need for appropriate legislation that provides such health specialists with the appropriate authority and responsibility. This would enable them to realise their potential and contribute to health-care reforms and to the improvement of public health. Delegates also recognised that there is a need for creating and training a new type of nurse who can practise as an independent professional.

To help achieve these aims congress participants defined the following objectives:

to increase the prestige and status of nurses;

to decrease the number of professionals leaving health-care services;

to review nurses' responsibilities and to delegate some physicians' responsibilities to nurses.

Conference members considered that the payment system for salaries should be changed according to the complexity, volume, and quality of services provided and the level of an individual's education. The current education and training methods could also be improved by developing an effective system of continuous education and certification, congress participants said.

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