Evidence based nutrition: Leading the way in innovation

The 22nd Biennial Nutrition Congress was especially significant as the university celebrates its centenary this year with the theme “A Century in the Service of Knowledge”. Hence, it was most apt to host this congress where one of the main aims was to share new knowledge in the fields of nutrition and dietetics.

Typically, the congress created an opportunity where young scientists and those entering a professional career as well as established scientists had the opportunity for close, friendly contacts with leaders in their respective fields. The 650 odd delegates had the privilege of the presence of a number of international invited speakers. These included Michael Zimmermann, Barry Margetts, John Cummings, Anna Larney, Ibrahim Elmadfa, Tola Atinmo, Barbara MacDonald and Marion Winkler. These international visitors made a significant contribution to the high scientific quality the congress programme offered. We were also privileged to have many of our own nutritionists present who have made tremendous contributions to the fields of nutrition and dietetics.

The role of tertiary institutions in the training of researchers and nutrition professionals within the discipline of nutrition and dietetics is paramount. These institutions have to ensure that the required standards within these disciplines are upheld. That research is relevant to the challenges of the country and the region, and so to strive for improved health for all, especially the marginalised in our communities. It should also aim to facilitate cross-disciplinary research to address the multi-faceted challenges in this particular discipline.

We have seen universities work together on several larger issues pertaining to nutrition and health i.e. National Food Consumption Survey and the registration of nutritionists. This was again evident through the excellent session led by Demetre Labadarios on the fortification baseline survey. Such approaches need to be encouraged to ensure a combined concerted effort at addressing many of the pressing national and regional issues within the nutrition domain i.e. impaired infant and childhood growth and development, food insecurity, maternal health and HIV/AIDS.

We also saw increasing collaboration between tertiary institutions in the region and the rest of Africa. The attendance of a number of delegates from outside South Africa demonstrated that. Such collaborative activities will ensure that Africa will increasingly address its own challenges in the field of nutrition and health, especially attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). The importance of achieving these goals was highlighted during the week when we saw a special high level meeting of the General Assembly of the United Nations on the achievement of the MDG. In particular, attention was given to Africa’s development needs. In this regard African nutrition professionals and scientists need to play an important role.

The 2008 Nutrition Congress proved once again that many excellent research projects have been conducted adding to the current body of knowledge. From many of the presentations it was clear that these results were applied in the different fields of nutrition. However, it is not yet optimal and the nutrition community has a huge challenge to ensure that the communities in need receive the benefit of new research findings. The congress’s increased emphasis on public health nutrition confirmed this.

A great deal of attention was given to ethics in nutrition research. Perhaps we have neglected this concept for many years and it is therefore most encouraging to see the emergence of an ethics conscience among the nutrition scientists. Not only is ethics relevant to the researcher participant interaction, but increasingly also between the researcher and industry on which scientists often depend for funding. Additionally, the increasing attention nutrition and human rights has received over the last few years is most encouraging and was highlighted through a most interesting presentation by Eleni Maunder who reminded us of how wrong things can go if there is no watchful eye on this very important issue.

The role of nutrition in infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS and TB highlighted by Prof Jimmy Volmink based on the ASSaf Report was a most significant contribution to the congress and is of paramount importance to public nutrition workers in the region.

The positive involvement and contribution by government representatives demonstrated the increasing close collaboration between the scientific community and government. As Bennie Sekhakane so aptly remarked at least in South Africa we have the political will do address the nutritional challenges. The congress enjoyed the support of Lynne Moeng, Gilbert Tshitaudzi, Maude de Hoop, Ann Behr and Bennie Sekhakane from the Directorate of Nutrition.

We would like to believe that the 2008 Nutrition Congress brought people from diverse, but related environments together, highlighted the relevant and urgent issues within nutrition and left us with the challenge to apply our research findings for the benefit of those most in need.

Finally, the Congress Organising Committee would like to extend its congratulations to all the prize winners who were acknowledged for their respective achievements in the field of nutrition and dietetics.

Andre Oelofse, Gerda Gerick
Congress Organising Committee
**NSSA GALA AWARDS**

Dr Petro Wolmarans NIRU, MRC

Prof Demetre Labadarios (Human Sciences Research Council of SA; Editor: SAJCN)

**The 2008 NSSA Award** (shared):

The Nutrition Society Award was established to recognise South African nutritionists who have made long standing contribution to nutrition and nutrition research in South Africa.

**ADSA GALA AWARDS**

ADSA/SASA Award: Ltr: Rene Smallberger (ADSA), Mike Faber (NIRU, MRC) Duduzile Mthuli (Sugar Association of SA)

ADSA: Flora Award: Cristelle de Witt (Unilever), Jane Badham, Rene Smallberger (ADSA)

**AWARDS FOR PRESENTATIONS (ORAL AND POSTER)**

Members of the adjudicating panel: Blaauw Reneé (US), Kruger Salomé (NWU), Kunneke Ernie (UWC), MacIntyre Una (LU), Pieters Marlien (NWU), Van Stuijvenberg Lize (MRC), Wenhold Friede (UP), Wentzel-Viljoen Edelweiss (NWU)(Convenor)

**Unilever young scientist (<35 years):**

1st prize

CE Naude – Fruit and vegetable consumption in South African children aged 12 to 108 months: a secondary analysis of the national food consumption survey data

2nd prize

GC MacDougall – Prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) programme at Dr George Mukhari Hospital: Growth of infants

**Unilever senior scientist (>35 years):**

1st prize

L van Stuijvenberg – Comparison of the efficacy of NaFeEDTA, ferrous fumarate and electrolytic iron as fortificants in South African bread

2nd prize

AA Kalimbira – Predictors of anaemia in Malawian preschool children from communities that participated in a Micronutrient and Health Programme

**William Fox memorial prize for the best presentation by a dietitian**

C Biggs – The prevalence and degree of dehydration in rural South African forestry workers

The William Fox Memorial Award was established in honour of Dr William Fox who was a Nutritional scientist and a long standing and founding member of the Nutrition Society. The Prize is awarded for the best presentation by a dietitian and was established to encourage research and presentations by dieticians.

**ADSA AWARDS**

Best poster by a dietitian (ADSA member):

**1st prize**

F Wenhold on behalf of Pohorski A, Schlienther C, Spalovský L, van Huyssteen A – Validity of modelling clay as a portion size estimation aid in adolescent girls

**2nd prize**

FA Hermann – Evaluation of an insulin infusion protocol and factors influencing glycaemic fluctuation in an intensive care setting: A prospective chart review
OPENING

Prof Andre Oelofse, Congress Chairman

Prof FPR de Villiers on ethical decision making

Mr Alpha Rasekhala on updates from the Professional Board of Dietetics

COCKTAIL FUNCTION

Jane Badham welcoming delegates at the cocktail function

Gerda Gericke (UP), Andre Oelofse (UP), Mrs Jane Badham and Mrs Lisanne du Piessis (SU)

Prof FPR de Villiers (Medunsa) and Prof John Pettifor (Wits)

Prof Tola Atinmo (Nigeria) and Prof J Kinabo (Sokoune Univ. of Agriculture, Tanzania)

Prof Mthethane (Univen), Emmerentia Strydom (MRC), Vanessa Mbatsani (Univen), Lindelani Muaphi (Univen), Pfarelo Mthethane (Prof’s daughter)

Mr Larry Umunna, Barbara, Dr MacDonald and Mr Elroy Bos from GAIN

Prof Wilna Oldepeare-Theron (Vaal Univ of Techn), Mrs Carin Napier (Durban Univ of Techn)

Matodzi Cherane (Univen), Solomon Mabapa (Univen)

Mrs Rene Smalberger (ADSA President), Mrs Dorothea McDonald (Greenacres Hospital)
TEATIME AND LUNCH

A special word of thanks to the following sponsors:

Abbott Laboratories: Transport to the Gala Dinner, Coca-Cola South Africa: Welcome Cocktail Party & Water for the Congress