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## PUBLIC HEALTH NUTRITION

### Summary Report on the WHO Second Summer School

Ciechocinek Spa, Poland, 19-30 September 1994

#### ABSTRACT

The science of nutrition is in a period of rapid development. Epidemiological studies combined with clinical research are probing deeper into matters that will have consequences for how food supplies are planned and diets composed. The summer schools in public health nutrition are held to share the latest developments with colleagues in the countries of central and eastern Europe and of the former Soviet Union, who formerly were not in a position to freely avail themselves of western scientific literature and thus were unable to follow international developments in this field.

The 1994 summer school was the second in a series and provided a review of the current state of nutrition for participants whose daily work deals with nutrition but whose technical background is varied, i.e. medicine, pharmacy, biochemistry or food science. Lectures and discussions took place in Russian and in English with Russian interpretation.

Although most participants held leading positions in medical training or sanitary inspection, they felt the summer school made them better equipped to deal with nutrition problems and gave them new ideas and inspiration for different ways of dealing with their daily work.

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## **TARGET 4**

### **REDUCING CHRONIC DISEASE**

*By the year 2000 there should be a sustained and continuing reduction in morbidity and disability due to chronic disease in the Region.*

## **TARGET 16**

### **HEALTHY LIVING**

*By the year 2000, there should be continuous efforts in all Member States to actively promote and support healthy patterns of living through balanced nutrition, appropriate physical activity, healthy sexuality, good stress management and other aspects of positive health behaviour.*

#### **Keywords**

**NUTRITION**  
**PUBLIC HEALTH – education**  
**CCEE**  
**NIS**

## Introduction

This summer school was the second in a series on public health nutrition conducted by the Nutrition unit, WHO Regional Office for Europe with the prospective WHO collaborating centre, the Community Nutrition Unit at the Centre for Nutrition and Toxicology, Huddinge Hospital, Sweden.

The summer school was attended by 17 participants from Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Estonia, Latvia, Poland, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. The ten lecturers were from the WHO Regional Office for Europe, the Centre for Nutrition and Toxicology as well as experts from Denmark, Sweden and the United Kingdom. They represented a selection of the many subject areas that constitute public health nutrition.

The participants held leading positions in the area of food and nutrition in their own countries, either in medical education, epidemiology and sanitary inspection or research. It is normally required that the participants have some experience in nutrition work and that they intend to continue in this field. This year the course was aimed at Russian-speaking people with little or no knowledge of English. Therefore high-quality simultaneous interpretation into Russian was provided throughout the course.

### *Purpose of the summer school*

The summer school series aims to provide up-to-date information on the current state of nutrition for people working in the area of food and nutrition in countries of central and eastern Europe (CEE) and the central Asian republics (CAR). The courses also provide an opportunity for networking with colleagues from western Europe, USA and Canada, who need to become more familiar with the thinking and real situation in the new Europe's central and eastern parts.

The Nutrition unit at the Regional Office and the Centre for Nutrition and Toxicology keep in contact with course participants during the first year after the event.

## Programme

Nutrition, being an extremely broad subject, demands that the course span such areas as food and nutrition policy, the relationship between diet and health, food control and eating behaviour. The course also focuses on certain selected subjects assumed to be of particular public health interest, such as breastfeeding,

iodine deficiency disorders and methods for dietary assessment studies. Large subject areas such as nutrition epidemiology, mass catering and food composition databanks are touched upon.

The summer school aims to inspire participants to seek further information after the course about the various topics on their own initiative, and therefore puts priority on breadth rather than depth of study. The course programme is given to the participants in outline at the beginning, but it is continually adjusted as the course develops to suit the interests and needs of participants. The course is continually evaluated by participants, first by a written questionnaire, then a mid-way open discussion and finally by another extensive questionnaire. This is usually new to participants, but they accept the need for adjusting the course under way to better serve their needs and interests.

Plenary lectures and discussions, working groups, individual work as well as role-playing and demonstrations are all part of the summer school programme. For most of the participants, these were new modes of communication but nonetheless enthusiastically received.

The course was extremely intensive but the participants felt stimulated and were impressed by their own motivation and performance.

## Conclusions

The main result of the summer school was the opportunity it gave colleagues from CEE and CAR to meet a different academic style and become well acquainted with the new paradigm of public health nutrition.

It was no small task to increase the level of knowledge of the group, for most participants already held leading positions with responsibility for food and nutrition in their home countries or towns and possessed much factual knowledge in advance. Nevertheless, the course served to broaden their perception of subjects that belong to food and nutrition and helped them think in strategic and systematic terms, using modern management methods to tackle problems they meet in their own work situation. It also taught the lecturers a lot about the situation colleagues in central and eastern parts of the Region are facing and the problems they have had in the past.

The very positive evaluation the participants gave of the summer school shows that the academic objectives were achieved. Only the future will show if a successful network was created too.