

Preface

Human health/disease has many dimensions. Human health/disease is influenced by numerous variables; the primary determinants being ecological, cultural and nutritional factors. These factors are responsible for influencing the biological and social determinants of health and disease. The state of human health is an outcome of the interactions between these factors. The study of human health/disease is of paramount importance not only from the academic point of view but it also has immense applications as far as human development is concerned. Its study is of much interest to practitioners of many disciplines like anthropologists, physicians, epidemiologists, ecologists, health care workers, nutritionists, sociologists, and others.

This Special Issue of the Journal of Human Ecology is entitled ***“Ecology, Culture, Nutrition, Health and Disease”*** and contains 22 papers spread over three units from contributors from varied disciplines from different regions of the world.

The first unit deals with **Ecology, Culture, Health and Disease**. The first paper by Venter examines the role of prebiotics in the improvement of human health. The article by Sarri et al. deals with cultural and religious aspects of diet and lifestyle. Different methods of assessing body composition are summarized by Bedogni et al. Mondal et al. presents and discusses the risk factors of anaemia among the Garo of Meghalaya, North East India. Lastly, Pryer et al. highlight adult illness in Dhaka (Bangladesh) slum households.

The second unit deals with ecology, culture, nutrition and health. The majority of the papers (thirteen) of this Special Issue are found in this unit. The underlying theme of this unit is nutrition. The first paper by Wells deals with cultural factors in breastfeeding. Khongsdi highlights and discusses some of the causes of malnutrition in human populations. The next two papers by Gupta et al. and Bose et al. deal with undernutrition among children in Jaipur, Rajasthan (India) and East Midnapore, West Bengal (India), respectively. Findings on nutritional status and hypertension among Tibetan adults in India are presented by Tripathy et al. Agrahar-Murugkar recommends ways to improve the nutritional status of Khasi tribal women of North-East India using wild edibles. Puoane et al. highlight the socio-cultural factors influencing food consumption patterns among black South African population in an urban township. Savva elucidates the role of anti-inflammatory effect of the Mediterranean diet. Hawks et al. discuss motivation for eating and the nutrition transition in the Philippines. Shell-Duncan and McDade report on the cultural ecology of iron deficiency among Northern Kenyan school children. Dunham et al. highlight the dietary differences among women of Polish descent in the United States by country of birth and level of education while Colic Baric et al. report differences in breakfast consumption among school children from four geographical regions in Croatia. Lastly, Calderon's paper deals with university student's risk for disordered eating.

The last unit deals with ecology, anthropometry and health. In this unit, Bisai et al. report the findings of a study of maternal age and parity on birthweight among Bengalees of Kolkata. An excellent paper on stunting and underweight is authored by Blossner et al. Ghosh deals with age and sex variations in anthropometric traits among Bengalee Hindus of Calcutta, India. Lastly, there is an interesting article on physical activity by McManus.

It is hoped that these articles would be of interest to students and researchers of human health/disease.

Finally, I must express my sincere thanks to Dr. Veena Bhaisn, for her continuous help and encouragement during the preparation of this Special Issue of the Journal of Human Ecology.