

# Tackling a tidal wave: sound nutrition knowledge today for a better tomorrow...

Sumantra Ray

## WHAT IS THE PROBLEM WE ARE FACING?

Perhaps the only constant phenomenon in the world is that it is constantly changing. However, some changes are cumulative over time and present global challenges at an unprecedented scale. The facts are striking: the ever-increasing population with greater survival at both ends of the life course seeks to thrive against the tide of limited resources as the sustainability of global food security is brought into question, but at the same time, increasingly urbanised populations are exposed to exaggerated and energy-dense food environments that place individuals at risk of oversupply. This presents us with a complex triad of malnutrition, and permutations of undernutrition, overnutrition and specific nutrient deficiencies that co-exist within any given population. Tackling this triple burden requires a coordinated and agile approach to the generation, as well as application of nutrition knowledge to equip policy-makers as well as practitioners with the tools required to combat as well as acute and chronic forms of disease-related malnutrition.

## WHY THIS JOURNAL AS PART OF A SOLUTION?

The creation of this landmark journal—*BMJ Nutrition, Prevention & Health*—comes at a pivotal time, particularly as the NNEdPro Global Centre for Nutrition and Health has been working for the past decade to strengthen the translation potential of nutrition science for disease prevention and best

healthcare practice. Over 2018 as we mark our 10th anniversary, this new journal is testament to our commitment towards the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016–2025) and the aspirations of the UN Standing Committee on Nutrition to end malnutrition in all of its forms by 2030. While there have been a plethora of health-related targets set by the global community over the decades and at times these have been difficult to achieve, these refreshed goals emphatically draw out the key role that diet and nutrition play in health, disease and well-being. While being more specific than ever before, the 2025–2030 vision also remains sensitive to the sustainable development goals connecting nutrition with wider social and environmental factors. Today, we are also fortunate to have a varifocal lens allowing us to look simultaneously at population-level needs whilst developing tailored approaches to address interindividual variation. All of this reflects a better understanding of how nutrition can be translated from evidence to action. However, sustaining such a ‘knowledge-to-action cycle’ requires a continuous feed of robust and cutting-edge research into the realms of practical application. This new journal will become a key vehicle to help drive this dynamic process.

## HOW WILL WE NAVIGATE THE ROAD AHEAD?

The NNEdPro Global Centre, while anchored in Cambridge (UK), is an interdisciplinary think-tank working without borders and is well positioned to facilitate knowledge exchange surrounding this journal, underpinned by the aim of improving nutrition-related health outcomes by training professionals, strengthening research, implementing

solutions and addressing inequalities. However, this cannot be done in isolation and as we launch *BMJ Nutrition, Prevention & Health*, NNEdPro will garner views by harnessing its international networks through a range of linked events across four continents. Fostering an interactive dialogue with a comprehensive network of stakeholders representing a range of perspectives from research, education, policy and practice will seek to define the landscape around us in terms of both the barriers to navigate and the facilitators to leverage as we seek to strengthen nutrition science, its implementation and its impact.

In the July 2018 NNEdPro Summit launching this journal, three key areas will be explored in shaping a joint strategy for the future:

### Domain 1: evidence-based nutrition

Nutrition is a cognate scientific discipline drawing from a range of allied sciences, sharing similar paradigms of precision on one hand but uncertainty on the other. However, even strong evidence-based nutrition can be challenging to translate, due to the interdisciplinary relevance of its applications and the multitude of voices that all speak of the relationships between diet, nutrition and health. While seeking consensus on principles defining good science, it is important to explore solutions that can embed sound nutrition knowledge into daily practice.

### Domain 2: nutrition and implementation science

The sustainable application of existing and emerging knowledge into health systems requires careful methodological planning, execution and evaluation. Such a process would need to draw from the realms of implementation science and the ‘knowledge-to-action framework’, as well as from the sound principles of healthcare leadership, to create seamless implementation pathways integrating primary, secondary and tertiary prevention by placing patients and the public at the heart of all endeavours

### Domain 3: meeting global nutrition challenges

Meeting global nutrition challenges requires carefully coordinated intersectoral efforts that can together address

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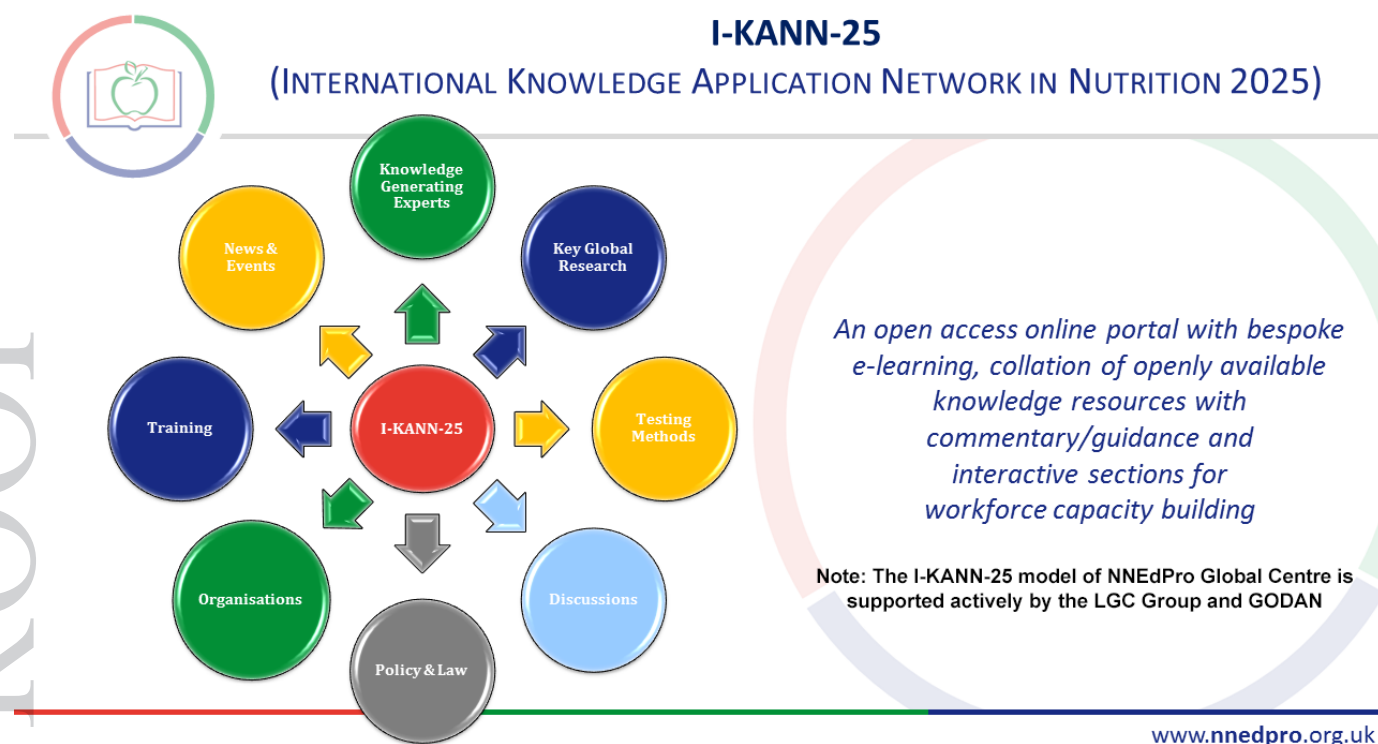


Figure 1

issues cutting across different agroecological areas with varying population distributions of food insecurity and nutrition-related disease. This requires a step-ladder approach from food production, through the food environment to dietary patterns and health, while recognising the role of evidence-informed education and advocacy at each stage.

Finally, we are grappling with not one but two forming tidal waves: one arising from the global burden of disease with nutrition as a key determinant, and the other from the overflow of nutrition facts and figures, as well as fads and fiction, that come at us continuously and furiously as part of the information age. The NNEdPro Global Centre and its strategic partners seek to equip us in handling this emerging phenomenon by paving the way to developing the 'International Knowledge Application

Network in Nutrition 2025' (I-KANN-25) over a 7-year period from 2019 to 2025 (figure 1). This would include consideration of sectors and professions where nutrition capacity building is needed the most, topics in most need of being addressed, populations at greatest risk, methods of knowledge synthesis, delivery and impact evaluation, and open data sharing for evidence-informed discussions and decisions. There will be important synergies between the I-KANN-25 vision and *BMJ Nutrition, Prevention & Health* which will become a central curator of sound nutrition knowledge today, helping to shape a better tomorrow!

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