

EARLY NUTRITION

Long-term effects of early nutrition on later health

Kick-off press release
Munich, 21st of March 2012

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCHERS JOIN FORCES TO TRACK THE LINK BETWEEN EARLY NUTRITION AND LONG-TERM HEALTH

The Ludwig-Maximilians-University of Munich today initiates a transnational research programme on strategies for prevention and intervention in pregnancy and early post natal life to tackle later obesity and associated disorders. The Kick-off Meeting of the project entitled *EarlyNutrition* is joined by more than 60 scientists from 36 universities and research institutes in Europe, the USA and Australia. The key aim is to develop recommendations for optimal early nutrition that incorporate long-term health outcomes. The project has received an exceptionally positive response from Brussels as well as about 9 Mio Euro financial support through the 7th EU Framework Programme within the “Food” theme towards a total project budget of more than 11 Mio. Euro.

With the Kick-off Meeting on the 21st to the 23rd of March 2012, the active phase of the *EarlyNutrition* project starts. This international consortium consists of some of Europe's leading investigators in the area and is joined by researchers working in the food industry as well as small and medium enterprises across and beyond Europe. The project is coordinated by Professor Berthold Koletzko, Dr. von Haunerschen Children's Hospital, Ludwig-Maximilians-University of Munich. The research group investigates early risk factors during pregnancy and early childhood that modulate the risk of obesity and related disorders in later life.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), overweight and obesity are the fifth leading risk for global deaths. In 2010, around 43 million children under five were overweight. Childhood obesity is a serious problem because it is not only a predisposition to many other childhood diseases but also to early death. The growing prevalence of overweight is propelling the upsurge of diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular diseases and the risk of other non communicable diseases. Globally, 44% of the diabetes burden, 23% of the ischaemic heart disease burden and between 7% and 41% of certain cancer burdens are attributable to overweight and obesity. Professor Berthold Koletzko points out: *„Obesity overall and particularly in childhood has rapidly increased all over the world during the past three decades. There is an urgent need to develop and apply effective strategies of reversing this alarming trend.“*

Evidence, particularly from the recent European Commission funded *Early Nutrition Programming Project (EARNEST)*, also coordinated by Prof. Koletzko and his team, confirmed that early nutrition and lifestyle have a long lasting programming effect on later health and risk of disease. The Ludwig-Maximilians-University of Munich and its project partners will therefore concentrate on four target groups, namely women prior to pregnancy, pregnant and breastfeeding women, infants and young children, to explore the current key hypotheses on likely causes and pathways of early life programming of obesity risk. The project uses state of the art methodology to allow a step-by-step understanding of the development of obesity. This focus has been selected because some of the best evidence for long-term health effects of early nutrition exists in this area.

The project's impact comprises definitive evidence on early nutrition effects on health and enhanced EU and global policies. *EarlyNutrition* expects to also boost major economic benefits through obesity prevention and value-added nutritional products, and to provide practical recommendations on optimal nutrition in target groups and a strengthened scientific basis for policy decisions.

„The available evidence indicates that early nutrition during pregnancy and infancy has a powerful effect on later obesity risk, but the underlying pathways of obesity are likely to be multifactorial. We consider that once established in the population, the risk of obesity may accelerate from generation to generation. Therefore, elucidation of early life origins is of key importance“ concludes Prof. B. Koletzko.

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EarlyNutrition Background:

The EU project “*EarlyNutrition*” (“Long-term effects of early nutrition on later health”) is a collaborative project of the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Union with the Grant Agreement No. FP7-289346-EarlyNutrition. The project aims at providing the scientific foundations for evidence based recommendations for optimal early nutrition that incorporate long-term health outcomes. The project will run for five years and is receiving 8,96 Mio EUR funding from the EU towards a total budget of 11,12 Mio EUR. The Ludwig-Maximilians-University of Munich serves as coordinator of the project’s ambitious research programme.

The project consortium consists of 30 partners from academia, 3 from industry and 4 partners from the small and medium enterprise (SME) sector.

Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (Germany) -
King's College LONDON (UK) -
Medical University of Graz (Austria) -
Statens Serum Institute (Denmark) -
University of Murcia (Spain) -
University of Nottingham (UK) -
Norwegian Institute of Public Health (Norway) -
University College Dublin, National University of Ireland, Dublin (Ireland) -
University Amsterdam (Netherlands) -
University Rovira I Virgili (Spain) -
Leiden University Medical Center (Netherlands) -
University of Southampton (UK) -
Erasmus University Medical Center (Netherlands) -
University of Granada (Spain) -
University of Copenhagen (Denmark) -
Medical University of Warsaw (Poland) -
The chancellor, Masters and Scholars of the University of Cambridge (UK) -
University College Cork, National University of Ireland, Cork (Ireland) -
University Degli Studi di Milano (Italy) -
The Children’s Memorial Health Institute (Poland) -
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (Greece) -
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Medscinet UK LTD (UK) -
ServiceXS BV (Netherlands) -
Biolution GmbH (Austria) -
Nizo Food Research BV (Netherlands) -
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The Regents of the University of California (United States) -
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Case Western Reserve University Corporation (United States) -
Telethon Institute for Child Health Research (Australia) -
Murdoch Children’s Research Institute (Australia) -
The University of Adelaide (Australia) -

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