

Nutrition practices

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Receiving proper nutrition to satisfy the physiological needs of man is a general knowledge that everyone is aware of. The food that we eat is necessary not only to fulfill the biological urge to satisfy hunger, but also to nurture the human body in order to withstand illnesses and diseases for a longer and healthier life.

Although this is a common goal for nations, particularly of the United States, as manifested in healthcare services and policies granted to their citizens, other external factors seem to influence how individuals perceive nutrition. One major factor which affects the nutritional decisions and influences of individuals is their culture, for one's racial or ethnic roots or backgrounds are attributed to nutrition practices.

This fact may be observed in hundreds of individuals who belong to various racial and ethnic groups residing in the US. The evaluation or assessment of the nutrition practices undertaken by these individuals reveal that they are at high risk for experiencing health and nutritional deficiencies.

For instance, the Pima Indians were found out to be at great risk for contracting diabetes primarily fueled by obesity. However, in this case, aside from the nutrition practices, the genetic make-up of this ethnic group also influences their health and wellbeing. Another case is the implication of the exclusion of milk, and other dairy products in the diet of Asian Americans and Hispanic Americans. ("Ethnic Traditions," 2008)

This is because studies have shown that these particular ethnic groups are more prone to lactose intolerance which leads them to remove dairy products from their nutrition practices or diet ("Ethnic Traditions," 2008),

consequently leading to Vitamin A, B12, D, and Calcium deficiencies (“Vitamins and Minerals,” 2008)

Other health and nutritional deficiencies that are most common in the US for racial or ethnic groups include lack of Omega 3 fats, Copper, and dietary fiber. For the male populations belonging to African American and American Indian ethnic groups, they are most at risk for Vitamin A deficiency.

This is because it has been observed that they refuse to consume vegetables in their diet. Some vegetables that are essential parts of the American diet contain beta-carotene which is a valuable substance present in them from which Vitamin A is taken from. (“Ethnic Traditions,” 2008*)

Aside from the minor influences of physical and genetic features or characters, one component of racial or ethnic culture also influences nutrition practices. Religion plays a major role in dictating what kind of diets individuals will be implementing. For instance, individuals who are Jewish refrain from eating the common types of meat such as beef and pork and prefer meat from sheep, goat, etc. instead.

This religious belief has something to do with the distinction of the clean and unclean meats. Moslems on the other hand are not allowed to consume pork and alcohol. In addition, some Islamic festivals require that they practice fasting which refrain them from consuming food and drinks at a particular time during the day. This particular cultural and religious practice affects the health and wellbeing of Moslems. (“Ethnic Traditions,” 2008)

From the various, but limited, examples provided in this text of the various cultural nutrition practices that racial and ethnic groups observe, the

influence of such practices are perceived to be detrimental to their health and wellbeing.

In addition, resolving the issue of ethnic disparities in terms of health care and nutrition is quite difficult to resolve since it would be far-fetched to reverse a culture that has long existed. Moreover, the influence of physical and genetic factors is unavoidable. The challenge presented within this text now is how cultural differences and the standards and guidelines of health and nutrition are to be reconciled in order to come up with a cohesive society that is consciously aware of the need to promote health and nutrition for the betterment of human life.

References

“ Ethnic Traditions.” (2008). Retrieved December 20, 2008, from The World’s Healthiest Foods. Website: <http://www.whfoods.com/genpage.php?tname=specialneed&dbid=11>

“ Vitamins and Minerals.” (2008). Retrieved December 20, 2008, from The Vegetarian Society of United Kingdom. Website: <http://www.vegsoc.org/info/vitmineral.html>