



Nutrition Society – News Bits

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Diversity in Nutrition – Nutrition Congress 2004

The organisers of the 20th Biennial Congress of the Nutrition Society of South Africa (NSSA) and the 8th Biennial Congress of the Association for Dietetics in South Africa (ADSA), alias Nutrition Congress 2004 and held on 23 - 27 August 2004 at the Goudini Spa Holiday Resort, Worcester, were confident that the congress would be a success. However, both the number of delegates and the standard of the oral and poster presentations exceeded all expectations.

The presence of the International Union of Nutritional Sciences (IUNS) Council members who met during the congress provided the organisers with the opportunity to incorporate more international speakers in the programme. This definitely contributed to the high standard of oral presentations and valuable inputs from internationally recognised nutrition scientists. No fewer than 14 international speakers were present at the 4½-day congress. Professor Jennie Brand-Miller, Chair in Human Nutrition at the School of Molecular and Microbial Biosciences at the University of Sydney, was the ADSA invited speaker and gave a talk on the glycaemic index. The NSSA invited Dr Penelope Nestel, Nutrition Coordinator for HarvestPlus, who addressed the congress on 'HarvestPlus: Potential for Impact, Institutional Structure, and Vision'. Other international speakers, to mention a few, were Professor Mark Wahlqvist, IUNS President at the time of the meeting; Professor Lindsay Allen from the Department of Nutrition, University of California, Davis; Dr Martin Bloem, Asia-Pacific Regional Director and Indonesia Country Director of Helen Keller International; Professor Barrie Margetts of the Institute of Human Nutrition, University of Southampton (Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Public Health Nutrition); and Professor Ricardo Uauy, member of the Chilean Academy of Medicine and chair in Public Health Nutrition at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. With such a line-up the organisers found that complying with the theme of Diversity in Nutrition was easily achieved! Our 'local' scientists and speakers should also be congratulated on setting a high standard.

The following topics were covered during plenary and parallel sessions:

- Functional foods
- Nutrition in prevention of chronic disease
- Ageing
- Lipids and heart disease: revisited
- Labelling legislation
- Nutrition in critically ill patients
- Sports nutrition
- HIV nutrition
- Nutrition in women's health

- Management and marketing
- Dietary intake and problems with eating
- Ethics
- Household food security and nutrition education
- Micronutrients
- Paediatric nutrition
- Allergies – diagnostic procedures

The 2002 Nutrition Congress in Potchefstroom showed that the incorporation of Master Classes in the programme is successful and highly interactive. The aim of a Master Class is to explore a topic by participating in an interactive session under the direction of an expert in the field. This provides the participants with the opportunity to have more in-depth discussions in the presence of experts in the field of interest.

The Master Classes were well attended and the feedback was very positive. The following topics were covered:

- Nutrition and genetics
- Essential fatty acids
- Gastrointestinal disorders
- Micronutrient malnutrition
- PNI (psychoneuroimmunology)
- Metabolic syndrome
- Paediatric Food Based Dietary Guidelines (FBDG)
- Nutrition education

The social programme was highly supportive of the scientific programme. No one will dispute the fact that daily exercise in the form of a stroll to the marquee was always worthwhile, with a three-course lunch awaiting the delegates. And what would a congress in the heart of the Boland be without Bacchus paying a visit? The wine tasting evening, presented by various wine cellars and estates in the area, was a most entertaining evening whether or not you were used to such diversity in taste!

In conclusion, with a record attendance of more than 520, interest in the 2004 Nutrition Congress totally exceeded the expectations of the organisers. The theme of Diversity in Nutrition must have given all participants not only food for thought, but also information to stimulate their research, strengthen collaboration, and establish new contacts and information to use in their practices.

Finally, thanks to all the sponsors, invited speakers, participants and, last but not least, the organisers, who were challenged till the end but eventually did a great job. As one of our international speakers said: 'I am amazed by the standard of the congress and the venue. Great job!'

One way to be part of our next biennial congress, in Port Elizabeth in 2006, is to join the Nutrition Society and keep yourself posted on the venue and the programme. See www.nutritionssociety.co.za for more information about the Society and how to join.

Marius Smuts

Chairperson: Western Cape Branch of NSSA