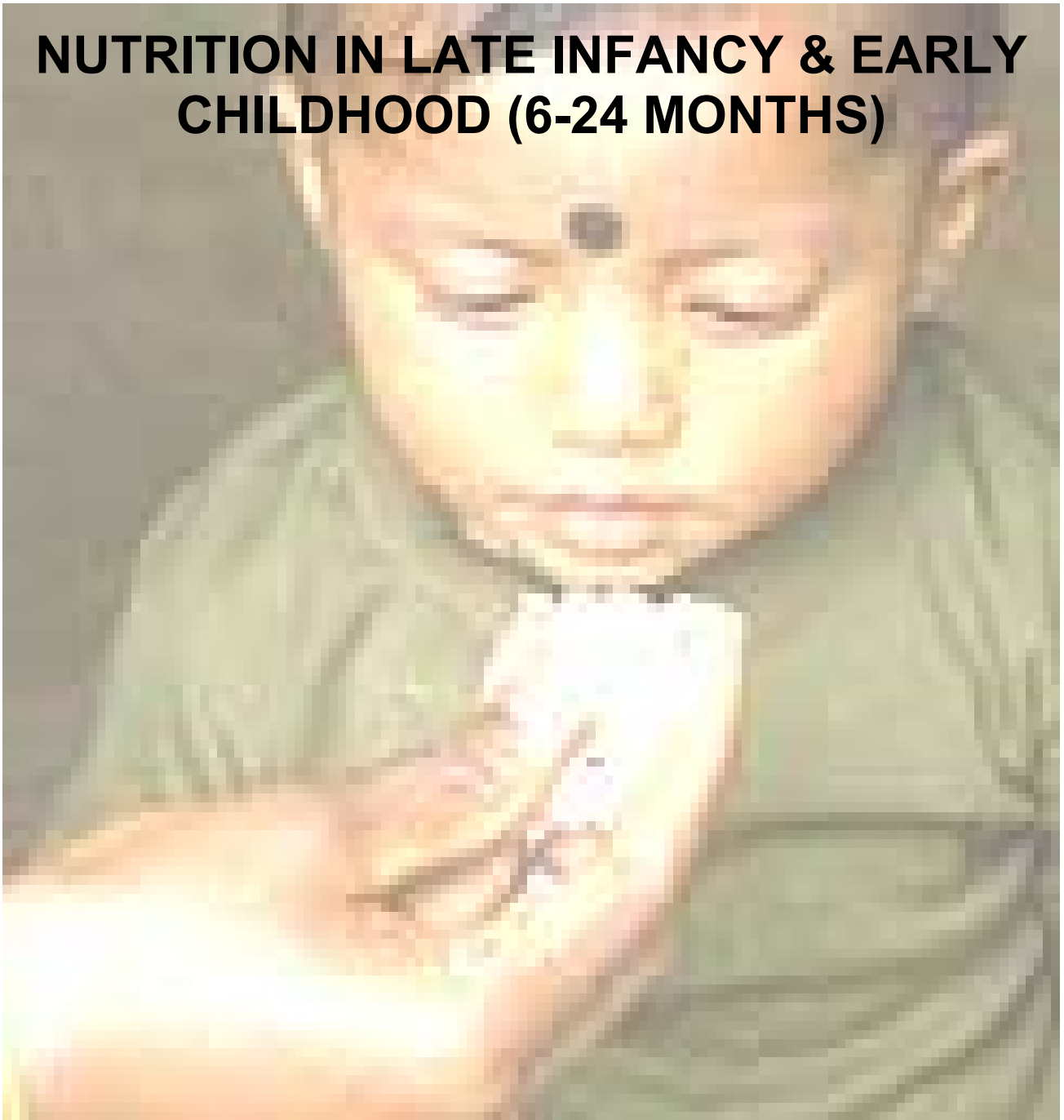


NUTRITION IN LATE INFANCY & EARLY CHILDHOOD (6-24 MONTHS)



5TH AND 6TH JULY 2006

NUTRITION FOUNDATION OF INDIA

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PROGRAMME AGENDA

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Nutrition Foundation of India (NFI) deeply appreciates the support provided by the Ministry of Woman and Child Development, Government of India in organizing the symposium on “Nutrition in Late Infancy and Early Childhood (6-24 months)”. We would like to place on record our appreciation of the support provided by the World Bank for this symposium.

We acknowledge with thanks the committed scientists for their excellent technical presentations and the participants from various organizations for their incisive comments during discussions; their contributions made this symposium a truly memorable one.

FOREWORD

The age period, 6 months –24 months, is in many respects a crucial phase of child development. This is the age period when stunting sets in.

Exclusive breast-feeding terminates by the end of six months and it must be ensured that the child gets complementary feeds of adequate nutritive value. Unfortunately this is not the case in many poor households. There are also several other factors possibly involved in retardation of growth of children during this period, such as, lack of access to safe drinking water, repeated alimentary infections due to poor environmental hygiene and lack of adequate care in preparation and handling of food and poor child care largely arising from illiteracy of mothers. Elimination of stunting would call for a planned and effective convergence of efforts addressed to each of these factors. Unfortunately, such focussed efforts have not been undertaken in India. The ICDS (Integrated Child Development Services) programme, which is India's major programme, addressed to child nutrition, hardly reaches children below three years- the crucial age group in which stunting sets in; does not include focussed action related to stunting in poor communities.

Of the factors contributing to stunting, the role of infections is important and relatively neglected. The period of infancy and early childhood is characterized by poor immunocompetence and increased susceptibility to infections. Studies in Bangladesh reported in this publication have shown that the incidence of alimentary infections in children is apparently far greater than that what would be estimated from the prevalence of acute diarrhoeas. Many children suffering from alimentary infections do not apparently manifest with acute diarrhoea. These infections result in atrophy of intestinal villi, impaired absorption of nutrients and lack of appetite. The provision of safe drinking water and enforcement of personal hygiene in preparation of foods could go a long way in combating stunting in our country.

The recent emergence of the “dual nutritional burden” far from leading to de-emphasising efforts towards promoting child nutrition and growth, should, in fact be seen as providing added urgency to efforts in this direction.

C. Gopalan
President
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PREFACE

Pioneering studies carried out at the National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad in the sixties and seventies clearly showed that exclusive breast feeding for the first six months and continued breast feeding thereafter coupled with adequate, appropriate complementary feeds from food available at home, promotes growth and is associated with least morbidity. Global studies have now confirmed this. In 2002 World Health Assembly passed a resolution recommending these appropriate infant and young child feeding to be promoted globally for improving health and nutritional status.

The Tenth Five Year Plan in 2005 had set goals for infant and young child feeding, reduction in under-nutrition in the 0-36 month age group and IMR. Data from District Level Household Survey have shown that even now in India only about a third of the mothers exclusive breast feed up to six months and introduce complementary feeds at six months. As a result there is steep increase in under-nutrition rates between 6-24 months of age. The NFI Symposium was held in this context.

In his inaugural address Dr MK Bhan, Secretary, Department of Biotechnology, urged the participants to tackle the problem that the country had in translating knowledge into programmes and up-scaling good quality interventions to cover the diverse situations in the Indian sub continent. He suggested that it will be a major contribution if Nutrition Foundation of India can form a core group which will have a systematic dialogue on how to deliver nutrition interventions on scale with quality, build up a mechanism of getting feed back, providing timely response and support.

The Foundation acknowledges the cooperation from ICDDR Bangla Desh and participation of five ICDDR scientists in the Symposium. All the presentations and discussions during the two day Symposium addressed critical issues on how to deliver good quality nutrition and health care to the 6-36 month children within the existing constraints. It is hoped that the Proceedings from this Symposium will provide useful leads for effective interventions to combat under-nutrition and ill health in children during the critical first three years of life .

Prema Ramachandran
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