

Letter to the Editor

The Cartagena Declaration: A call for global commitment to fight for the right to nutritional care

Dear Editor,

Nutritional care as a human right has been acknowledged by the Latin American Federation of Nutritional Therapy, Clinical Nutrition and Metabolism (FELANPE) through the International Declaration on the Right to Nutritional Care and the Fight Against Malnutrition. The Declaration was signed by all FELANPE presidents in the city of Cartagena, Colombia, on May 3 2019, reflecting the commitment of clinical nutritional societies to work together to promote optimal nutritional care for all patients and to fight malnutrition (<https://revistanutricionclinicametabolismo.org/en/online-first/>). The European Society for Clinical Nutrition and Metabolism (ESPEN) was invited to participate in the ceremony and the ESPEN Chairman attended and signed as witness.

The Cartagena Declaration should be considered to be a framework document whose principles constitute the basis for promoting the development of nutritional care in the clinical field, and raising awareness among public authorities, academic bodies, and the pharmaceutical industry (Table 1) [1]. It will also serve as an instrument for governments to promote the formulation of policies and legislation in the field of Clinical Nutrition in Latin America and in the international Clinical Nutrition community at large.

Attaining human rights is the ultimate goal of development as stipulated by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) [2]. According to the Food and Agriculture Organizations of the United Nations (FAO), a human rights-based approach to development may be the most promising method for ending poverty and injustice, as well as securing an adequate standard of living for all,

paying particular attention those groups and individuals who are most vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition [3]. However, disease-related malnutrition has been ignored by the 169 targets and 17 global United Nations SDG, especially by goal 2 “Zero Hunger” and goal 3 “Good Health and Well-being”. Specifically, we wonder how target 2.2 “By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition” will be accomplished if disease-related malnutrition is not addressed [2].

Thus, by signing the Cartagena Declaration, FELANPE's societies commit to raise nutritional care to the rank of an emergent human right closely related to the right to food and the right to health. This emergent human right can be grounded mainly on the fact that the right to food in the clinical context is frequently violated, due in part to being misunderstood in this context [4]. Respecting the right to nutritional care may contribute to benefitting from other human rights such as the right to health, the right to food and the right to life. On the contrary, violating the right to nutritional care may often impair benefitting from those other human rights. Moreover, the right to nutritional care seeks to protect those at nutritional risk and malnourished patients. This group should be considered as a “vulnerable group” due to the biological, psychological, economical and social impact of malnutrition as well as due to the fact that disease-related malnutrition is a condition that has been ignored. We consider that by raising nutritional care to the rank of a human right, we will contribute to achieving at least one of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), which seek to “put an end to all forms of malnutrition” by 2030.

Table 1

The 13 principles of the Cartagena Declaration.

1. Feed the ill person in conditions of dignity
2. Nutritional care is a process
3. Patient empowerment as a necessary action to improve nutritional care
4. The interdisciplinary approach to nutritional care
5. Ethical principles and values in clinical nutrition
6. The integration of healthcare based on value (economic aspects)
7. Clinical nutrition research is a pillar for the realization of the right to food in the clinical field and the fight against malnutrition.
8. Clinical nutrition education is a fundamental axis for fulfilling the right to nutritional care and the fight against malnutrition.
9. Strengthening networks
10. Creating an institutional culture that values nutritional care
11. Justice and equity in nutritional care
12. Ethical, deontological and transparency principles in the pharmaceutical and nutritional industries (Ph& NI)
13. Call to International Action

“The FELANPE urges the States and the Human Rights Council of the United Nations to recognize this Declaration and therefore the Right to Nutritional Care as a human right as it guarantees all people, especially the malnourished ill, access to nutritional care and, in particular, optimal and timely nutritional therapy in order to reduce the high rates of hospital malnutrition and the associated morbidity and mortality, among other things”.

Thus, we launch a global call to unite in fighting malnutrition and respecting the right to nutritional care.

Conflict of interest

None.

References

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