

Understanding nutrition through the eyes of students: Insights and experiences

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Dear editor of *Archivos Latinoamericanos de Nutrición*,

As a student of Nutrition and Dietetics program, I would like to comment on the article titled “*Association between dietary patterns and quality of life: A multicenter study in Latin American university students*”. This study addresses a topic of great relevance for public health and our professional training, especially for students in areas such as health sciences and food sciences.

During our training as future professionals, we are taught the importance of developing healthy eating habits and engaging in physical activity as pillars of wellness. However, recent research shows that both intrinsic and extrinsic factors lead students to adopt an unhealthy lifestyle, which may result in eating behavior problems and malnutrition (1). For example, a high proportion of university students report poor eating habits and sedentary behavior, which can compromise their present and future health, also revealing a lack of coherence between what is learned and what is practiced (2).

In this regard, the article in question makes a valuable contribution, as it highlights that students who adopt healthier diets report better levels of quality of life (3). Likewise, other studies show that additional factors, such as physical activity and sedentary behavior also impact on individual's health (4). This leads us to reflect, because on one hand, we aspire to be professionals who positively influence the health of others; nevertheless, academic pressure, routines and the environment do not always favor applying in our own lives what we have learned.

Thus, we see that the faculties of Health Sciences and Food Sciences, especially Nutrition and Dietetics programs, and university environments in general have a decisive role, since theoretical classes alone are not enough. Universities must also promote healthy environments, offer nutritious food options, provide spaces for physical activity and create opportunities for reflection on self-care, as recent reviews have noted regarding university food environments and the crucial role they play in students' dietary behaviors (5). In this way, students not only acquire knowledge but also develop habits that strengthen their credibility as future professionals.

Therefore, this article highlights the connection between nutrition and wellness during the university stage, while encouraging the strengthening of coherence between theory and practice in the training of students involved in fields related to health and food sciences. As a result, it is essential for universities to promote healthy environments that foster self-care so that future nutritionists can be consistent with the health messages we will convey to society.

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