

IN THE NEWS

WELLBEING: AN INDUSTRY HOT TOPIC

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July this year has been a month of both celebration and future watch. 50 years ago, man landed on the Moon. The airwaves and the newsprint have been full of documentaries and papers have produced souvenir editions. Speculation has been widespread about a Moonbase as a staging post to land man on Mars. Much has been made about the challenges and engineering problems. Not least the famous line 'We have a problem'. That time it was solved but it is sobering to remember that during the development phase three people died. I have listened/viewed many of these programmes and read various printed articles. A common theme was the enduring spirit of mankind to explore. This got me thinking and remembering an article from the Autumn 2014 edition of the ICATS News Letter: Antony Jinman (then Explorer in Residence at Plymouth University) wrote on flavour in the Arctic.

It is one thing to feed people for a few days on a Moon landing, something else to feed them for months on the International Space Station or on the months it will take to get to Mars. See the FlavourTalk article on page 24 where Professor Andy Taylor, Project Coordinator of the European Space Agency describes their contribution to work in the field. Medical historians write about the problems of vitamin deficiency confronting early sailing expeditions; this was still a major concern on Darwin's voyage of discovery where he crystallized his theory of evolution. Different nutritional issues may have paid a part in Franklin's 1845 expedition's problems where



129 were lost in attempting to discover the North West Passage. Accounts of Scott's expedition to the Antarctic also discuss the importance of food and nutrition. This includes the frightening need to consume a comparatively enormous number of calories under these conditions.

Here I return to the issue of wellbeing. Antony in his article wrote:

Nutrition is everything in an expedition. A high-calorie diet provides the necessary fuel required to sustain you both mentally and physically. However, food is not simply the provider of the physical energy required to get your body through the day; in addition to sustenance, the right food will sustain the mind and morale – putting you in a good frame of mind and ensuring you've got something to look forward to at the end of each day.

That is the historic context; where are we today? Anorexia has become a problem of increasing concern in some countries. We now have a new tool, not available in the 20th century, genetic analysis of large numbers of people. It has long been known that some diseases are caused by specific genetic problems. The statistical analysis of large databases allows us to now probe more diffuse and complex problems. Work, recently reported in the general press, has shown that there is a genetic correlation to anorexia. There may be physical and nutritional components to the condition but mind and body are intimately connected and all our five senses contribute to our wellbeing. Feeling good is not just the right number of calories with the right collection of minerals and vitamins. Nor is mental wellbeing just in the mind.

Just on cue, as so often, the New Scientist comes up with a timely review lead article *Everything you know about Nutrition is wrong: Convoluted studies, Cherry-picked evidence, Contradictory advice* (New Scientist 13th July 2019, page 32 – 35). Diet is a notoriously difficult area to research and the double-blind test gold standard of medical research is just not possible in long-term studies of people's eating habits. If the collection of data is problematic, so is the analysis. The article reports on a Chirag Patel examination of a National Health and Nutrition Survey on vitamin E supplements. Depending on which mix of 13 confounders are used, differing results can emerge.

What are we to make of all this information? One clear conclusion is that how we attain and retain wellbeing is complex. In our review of John Wright's book we report his reservations about the 'silver bullet' solution to flavour creation challenges. Answers are likely to come from a systems view of how the various contributing factors can be considered e.g. you may have a genetic linkage to a condition but it may not necessarily be triggered in a specific case. Our Aroma Trades is in the business of helping wellbeing by appropriate stimulation of our senses (e.g. odour and flavour). Given the complex and diffuse nature of the area, answers may come from unexpected directions. As always do read and listen widely, in the end it is rewarding.



Space food image : By NASA - http://www.nasa.gov/audience/formedia/presskits/spacefood/gallery_jsc2003e63872.html



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