



A Perinatal Strategy For Preventing Adult Disease: The Role Of Long-Chain Polyunsaturated Fatty Acids

Undurti N. Das

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Obesity, type 2 diabetes mellitus, hypertension, and coronary heart disease are serious diseases affecting a significant number of adults across the globe. Insulin resistance, low-grade systemic inflammation, low-birth weight, maternal protein malnutrition, neonatal high carbohydrate diet, and high fat diet are associated with these diseases. On the other hand, adequately breast-fed subjects are substantially at lower risk. If so, what is the link between these various factors? One possibility is that human breast milk

contains factors that confer resistance to these modern diseases. Here I present arguments that long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acids (LCPUFAs) present in the breast milk could be responsible for this beneficial action.

Though the entire class of LCPUFAs provided during the perinatal period is unlikely to have a role

in the prevention of adult diseases, it should be understood that each of these LCPUFAs exhibits a unique and in some cases opposing bioactive properties. It is important to note that there is a close interaction between (0-6 and (0-3 fatty acids. Human breast milk contains almost twice (0.78 vs 0.43 % w/w) the amount of (0-6 LCPUFAs (gamma linolenic acid, dihomo-gamma-linolenic acid and arachidonic acid) compared to (0-

3 LCPUFAs (eicosapentaenoic acid, docosapentaenoic acid, and docosahexaenoic acid). Obviously, the best would be to mimic the composition/concentrations in which these fatty acids are present in the breastmilk.

The concept that LCPUFAs given during the perinatal period (and

in adult life) is beneficial in preventing adult diseases certainly needs further exploration. I am confident that some of the enterprising readers will delve into the possibilities suggested after reading this book.

Undurti N. Das, M.D., FAMS. To My Wife Lakshmi and My Two Eyes Daughter Arundhati and Son Aditya Chapter #1 Introduction Fetal/Perinatal imprinting on later life. It is believed that stimuli or insults during critical or sensitive periods in early life can have lifetime consequences. This concept is well established in developmental biology and has been termed "programming". The evidence for programming confirmed the critical period for imprinting in animals, more so in birds'. Programming stimuli may be generated endogenously, such as hormonal signals', or they may be environmental.



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