

Training workshop on New WHO Child Growth Standards

Friday, July 9, 2010

An international training workshop on “New WHO Child Growth Standards” was organized by the World Health Organization quarters in Geneva in association with the WHO Collaborating Center for Education, Research, and Training at the Nutrition and Food Sciences Department at the American University of Beirut and the Lebanese Association for Nutrition and Food Sciences (LANFS).

The workshop took place at the Crown Plaza Hotel-Hamra, Beirut in June 2010. Twenty-one health professionals (instructors, dietitians, and nurses) were invited from different universities, hospitals, and the Ministry of Public Health to attend the workshop.

The WHO new growth charts differ from any existing growth charts in a number of ways. For the first time they describe “how children should grow,” which is a prescriptive approach, and represents a standard, rather than a reference describing “how children are growing.” The New WHO Child Growth Standards are global and for all children. They are intended to monitor the growth of every child worldwide regardless of ethnicity, socioeconomic status and type of feeding. It is, then, a more proactive way of measuring and evaluating child growth, setting out normative conditions and evaluating children and populations against that standard.

The WHO Child Growth Standards will be used as a tool in public health, medicine and governmental and health organizations for monitoring the well-being of children and detecting children or populations not growing properly or under- or overweight and may require specific medical or public health responses. Normal growth is an essential expression of health and a way to measure efforts designed to reduce child mortality and disease. Moreover, with the increase of childhood obesity which is becoming a concern globally and in Lebanon in particular, the new standards will play a pivotal role in the prevention and early recognition of childhood obesity. The new charts therefore provide a simple tool to assess the effectiveness of such efforts and help counter the double burden of malnutrition. It is important for parents, health professionals, and other caregivers to assess the growth and development of children at the individual and population level.

“The workshop will give the participants an excellent opportunity for being the first trained professionals in Lebanon who will provide the manpower for future training of health professionals in the country,” said Nahla Hwalla, Dean of the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences (FAFS) and President of LANFS.

The assessment of children’s growth will increase awareness of the magnitude of the problem of child malnutrition worldwide and decision-makers will be alerted as to how much remains to be done in order to ensure children’s healthy growth and development.

