

The JECH gallery

A glance at child health

More than 10 million children under 5 years of age die every year from five common illnesses: diarrhoea, respiratory diseases, malnutrition, measles and malaria.

Losing track (A)

Malnourished children are at greater risk of morbidity and mortality. Early detection of growth faltering and appropriate nutrition counselling is an important preventive intervention within IMCI (integrated management of childhood illness).^{1 2} In this picture, a low birthweight child went on in subsequent months to gain weight quickly, and in fact, recuperated considerable weight for age. However, after several disease episodes the weight gain slowed down and his growth curve separated from the percentile at which he was growing until then, and as a result at 11 months of age the child became clearly malnourished. Catch up growth took place after the disease episode but the normal curve had not completely recovered at the time when that picture was taken.

Smoking homes in Guatemala (B)

When evening comes in the high hills of Guatemala traditional cooking stoves placed inside the homes are lighted. The smoke fills the room and escapes through the straw roof giving the impression that houses have been set on fire. Indoor pollution caused by traditional stoves is associated with high risk of respiratory illnesses in women and children.

Latrine in Guatemala (C)

This latrine had long been abandoned. The residents, unable to maintain or demolish it had decided to cover its top. The latrine stood in that isolated community as a permanent remembrance of unhelpful and wasteful failure.

Bottle feeding (D)

This picture was taken in an outpatient clinic in Malawi. Bottle feeding in the first six months of age is extremely harmful for babies. There is a high risk of infection because of the use of contaminated water or bottles that results in diarrhoea, malnutrition and increased mortality. Besides, malnutrition may also result from inadequate dosing of breast milk substitutes. Commercial companies bear a huge responsibility for that situation. Promotion of breast feeding though strict enforcement of those commercial practices, education of health professionals, mothers and changes in hospital practices are essential public health interventions to promote children welfare in developing as well as developed countries.

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1 Tulloch J. Integrated approach to child health in developing countries. *Lancet* 1999;354:16-20.

2 <http://www.who.int/chd/publications/imci/index.htm>

