The Necessity of a New Paradigm in the Field of Food and Nutrition

L Ortiz-Hernández

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalrepository.unm.edu/lasm_cucs_en

Recommended Citation
http://digitalrepository.unm.edu/lasm_cucs_en/134

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Latin American Social Medicine at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in English by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact disc@unm.edu.

Objectives: To present the assumptions and limitations of "lifestyle", to then submit the contributions of social epidemiology.

Methodology: Analytical descriptive

Results: For the author, the term "lifestyle" has been criticized because of its use: a) it ignores the social, economic and cultural context related to health, b) it blames the individual for his own health problems ("blaming the victim"); c) holds a mechanistic conception of individuals; d) favors the biological bias explanations and doesn't rank the determinants of the food situation, and e) prevention strategies that use "lifestyle" as a base have had limited effectiveness. Because of these restrictions, new proposals have been developed to understand the conditions of nutrition and population health. One of them is the so-called social epidemiology, whose premises are as follows: reality is arranged in a hierarchical manner; biology is dependent on social processes; understanding health problems and nutritional needs should grow from the location of each group in society. A central concept of social epidemiology is "social inequalities in health."

The author presents an example of how food and nutrition problems can be understood from the socio-medical approach. The last part of the essay is devoted to contrasting the approach of lifestyle with that of social epidemiology.

Conclusions: The author concludes that prevention strategies should be located on three levels (individual, group and social) and not just at the individual level, just like our approach to lifestyle. For this, says the author, it is necessary to address the problems of health and nutrition against hegemonic paradigms, which is what social epidemiology does.