

ALPRO FOUNDATION AWARD CEREMONY

10th Nutrition & Health Conference 2009



New Research Implications for Educating Children

Parents wield more power than teachers in the '5 A DAY' campaign for children

This year, the 10th National Nutrition and Health Conference was chosen as the venue to present Meaghan Kitchen, currently a PhD student at the University of Leeds, with the prestigious annual award for an MSc thesis, from the Alpro Foundation.

Founded in 1996, as an initiative of Alpro, the Alpro Foundation is an independent non-profit organisation which is designed to support and promote scientific knowledge and research in the field of nutrition. The main focus of their research is that of plant-based nutrition and of course, a special interest in soya. A further aim of the foundation is to increase knowledge and awareness surrounding the impact of nutrition on human health, amongst healthcare professionals and the general public.

The Alpro Foundation Award for Masters, now in its second year, is a new European initiative from the Foundation and is specifically designed for individuals who are writing their Masters dissertation on 'the nutritional impact of plant food on health and wellbeing'. According to Professor Peter Shewry, from the Rothamstead Research Institute, who hosted the ceremony on behalf of Alpro and the Nutrition and Health Conference, this year's award had attracted many excellent dissertations from around Europe.

The winner of this prestigious award, who was presented with a cheque for 2500 Euros, was Meaghan Kitchen, a PhD student at the University of Leeds. Meaghan graduated with her masters in nutrition obesity and health from the University of Leeds this year. This lively bright and outstanding student is currently in her first year of PhD study at Leeds University. Her winning thesis, namely 'Process evaluation of a cluster randomised controlled trial of a school-based fruit and vegetable intervention: Project Tomato' has led on to her most recent work in evaluating school gardening. Meaghan's research has been chosen by the Alpro Foundation's Scientific Committee as the most outstanding research entry from across the UK & Ireland relating to plant-based nutrition and its impact on health.

In 2004, the government launched a major project to provide free fruit and vegetables in UK schools for children up to six years old to encourage them to eat their '5 A DAY'.

But once fruit and vegetables are no longer free, how can kids be motivated to eat more?

This new study shows that it is extremely difficult to motivate children through different activities at school. Instead, it seems to be the parents that hold the key to successful higher fruit and vegetable intake in our young.



Meaghan Kitchen said: "Parents are key to improving children's fruit and vegetable intake. Parents need be supported to take more of an interest in their children's diet. Activities which involve children trying fruit and vegetables, whether at home or at school, are more likely to have an impact on their 5 A DAY."

The study, named 'Project Tomato', introduced different teaching interventions into UK schools for seven year olds, including curriculum lessons, tasting sessions, cooking and gardening club – as well as giving children activities to do at home with their parents.

Researchers recorded how many fruit and vegetables children ate before and after the study, as well as getting parents and teachers to fill in questionnaires about the overall success of the activities.

So does ploughing more resources and efforts into the school curriculum result in kids making better dietary choices...or do parents still have to shoulder the responsibility?

The study does not identify a clear winner. The results were disappointing for schools with only one fifth of the curriculum activities provided implemented by teachers. On the other hand, parents who implemented 'Project Tomato' home activities generated a higher fruit and vegetable consumption in their children compared to parents who did not embrace the project.

Meaghan's supervisor, Charlotte Evans, added: "We are delighted that the hard work of our Masters student Meaghan has been recognised in

this important area of public health research."

Meaghan was delighted to be the winner of this prestigious award, and she is wished every success in her future career.

'Project Tomato' was funded by the National Prevention Research Initiative.



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About the Alpro Foundation

The Alpro Foundation is an independent non-profit organisation, which was founded in 1996 – an initiative of Alpro.

The objective of the foundation is to support and promote scientific knowledge and research in the field of nutrition and health with a focus on plant-based nutrition and a special interest in soya.

The foundation aims to help increase the awareness and knowledge about the impact of 'nutrition on human health' amongst health professionals and the general public.

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