Dear Readers,

The driving force behind the work done by all of our staff to bring to you this first issue of the Mediterranean Journal of Nutrition and Metabolism has been the desire to create a shared basis for everyone involved in an increasingly expanding scientific world.

Our ambition is to make the MJNM a model of dietary culture and a forum for the many realities of the Mediterranean world; our wish is that it will soon become established as a workshop of scientific experiences and exchange.

Food is not only something to be swallowed in order to stay alive, but also a pleasure and above all a source of health. But what is a “healthy” diet? In nutritional terms, it has long been clearly understood that it is one that provides all of the substances the body needs in order to survive, and also also helps us to live more healthily and for longer; all that remained was to find out exactly what it was – which is something that has led physicians, philosophers and priests to come up with suggestions, interdictions and fastings for centuries.

However, it is now possible to answer this question without elaborate theorisings based on medical and philosophical principles of a distant past, religious assumptions grounded on faith, or a blind reliance on tradition due to a radical distrust of anything that is new, because scientific research has shown that the traditional diets of the coastal regions of the Mediterranean are that best respond to the medical needs of the human body.

A wide range of large-scale retrospective, prospective and interventional studies have demontrated that such diets reduce the risk of developing degenerative conditions such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and cancer, which are currently by far the most frequent causes of death in industrially advanced countries. Furthermore, as pointed out in the WHO’s 2005 report “Preventing chronic diseases: a vital investment”, the number of deaths due to chronic diseases over recent years is double that due to any type of infectious disease, including HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, materno-infantile diseases and nutritional deficiences and, contrary to what is erroneously believed, 80% of chronic diseases are found in countries in which incomes are medium-low. Consequently, chronic diseases represent a truly global emergency involving both the most developed and the poorest countries.

Since the 1950s, thousands of researchers have followed the pathfinding studies of Ancel Keys by investigating the complex physiopathological mechanisms underlying the theories about the Mediterranean diet that have been developed on the basis of epidemiological findings, and have thus demonstrated the strict inverse correlations between its variously protective nutritional components and diabetes, dyslipidemia, cancerogenesis, oxidative stress, and phlogosis.

It is for this reason that we have decided to publish a journal designed to include all of the advances in biological and clinical research related to a context whose agro-alimentary roots have a common matrix that reflects general climatic conditions and shared historical and geo-cultural characteristics.

We trust that you will now read the results of our efforts carefully and hope that this will encourage you to collaborate with us in furthering the aims of the new Mediterranean Journal of Nutrition and Metabolism.

Samir G. Sukkar
Editor-in-Chief