

The feeding colloquium

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We conceive nutrient absorption in a continuous competition with bacterial growth;¹ 600 bacterial species inhabit the intestine and the vast majority is harmless. There are however about 100 species that are immunogenic.² The intestinal epithelium kills rapidly these bacteria.^{2,3} Most fragments spread to all body tissues by the lymphatic and blood circles.^{3,4} Their immune elimination constitutes the overall inflammation, a condition of poor immune efficiency.⁴⁻⁶ In my experience on thousands and thousands functional bowel disorders, the correction of the energy imbalance error was necessary and sufficient to stop relapses.

During my long activity in the Pediatric Gastroenterology Unit, mothers of diarrheic and malnourished infants fully engaged themselves enthusiastically to avoid meals with positive energy balance and construct a better son/daughter in the adulthood.⁷ Exclusion of any time interval with positive energy balance requires a continuous presence of the child in the mother's mind. It requires skill and attention and being prepared to an unremitting fight against conditioned intake. In my experience, mothers were the only help in recovering children, although some nurses understood and collaborated. Only one father was of similar help among thousands and thousands of families. The burden of achieving the health, efficiency and fortune of the future adult pertained to the mothers. Husbands helped in the creation of a calm, serene environment for this design and looked forward to insert the child in the society, but did not substitute mothers in health defense and prevention, except for brief periods in my experience. At least, husbands were unable at having a continuous presence of the child in their mind. In this age of richness, I wonder, how can mothers devolve such basilar, extremely rewarding, sometimes painful construction to other people. They may dismiss the ideal woman that was depicted by Raffaello that survived for 500years in Europe: a woman tranquil in her child care, with an attention focused only on her domestic environment. The model that was proposed by Giotto may be more up to date. A woman capable of taking up alone the direction of her husband's activity as well as aware and accountable for all events in the family and outside, although in continuous contact with the child: mothers helped me by reporting everything of their infants, even when they were in their working place. One phone call, or one of the many communication currently in use, allowed them to prevent contact loss from their child. As far I have worked with them, women have to maintain a dominant, direct role in rearing infants. Mothers cannot renounce to their most important and grateful enterprise, bringing up a human being. In this aim, we published "A plea to mothers" to suggest an intensification and an enrichment of awareness of their feeding colloquium with the child.⁸ The "feeding colloquium" is my humble proposal in feeding children: unremittingly knowing their child's current energy availability and current metabolic rate, covering the presumed expenditure with

energy rich food, perceiving any unexpected expenditure drop, any meal energy imbalance, reacting promptly to any unexplained change in the humor and in the playing through a continuous, though often marginal, albeit sufficient, attention to the child. Women in career may require additional help. A help that would diminish with the age of child. Their higher intellectual resources can compensate greater difficulties. Thus, the deepening and extension of the feeding colloquium is a great cultural and political change involving institutions, working rules and the market. The health improvement cannot be rapidly widespread like through the publication by a big scientific Journal with high impact factor. The extension of the feeding colloquium is a political issue that changes the society. The economic consequences are powerful and often adverse but less influential than the type of role women want to have.

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Conflicts of interest

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