VIEWPOINT

We All Eat the Same Rice

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As *Homo sapiens sapiens*, we are sapient (or intelligent) enough to know that we are an intelligent species. Similar to the Darwinian evolution that we experience, though, and the challenges that the Anthropocene era places on our environment and ecology, we face newer challenges related to health. One such challenge is obesity[1].

Obesity has emerged as a major disruptor of human health. Not only that, rising weights and waists have forced a recalibration of our external environment. From furniture to food, from clothing to crockery, sizes, and servings are increasing gradually[2]. Some of us feel that this enforced evolution, or metabolic metamorphosis, will not affect us. We follow healthy routines, in terms of lifestyle and mindstyle, and keep ourselves immune from involuntary ill-health. This, we think, ensures a healthy future for us and our loved ones.

"We all eat the same rice", say others (personal communication: Hans Raj Kalra). We share the same Planet Earth, breathe the same air, and seek sustenance from the same soil. This means, therefore, that we will experience similar outcomes, give or take a few years.

This is not true, the counter argument goes. Rice is of different types, as any oryzophilic denizen is aware. Each variety of rice has not only unique taste and texture, but different glycemic and satiety index as well. The way in which it is preserved, prepared, and presented also contributes to the glycemic load[3].

In spite of this, as humans, we remain bound to each other. One person's health or ill-health can influence the well-being of their family, friends, and peers. The butterfly effect hypothesis, in fact, posits that any tiny activity, whether related to health care or not, may lead to a domino effect on surrounding people and environment[4].

This holds true for our work as well. While a prescription merely has a paracrine effect (upon the adjacent person, i.e., patient), education, and counseling ensure an endocrine effect (i.e., upon the patient's family and friends, even if they are located at a distance). As physicians, it becomes our responsibility to view the patient not just as an individual, but as an integral part of a wider community. Each and every word, behavior and action of ours influences the health of our society, and our own mood as well[5].

We must be mindful of this, and our impact on the world around us. After all, we all are human beings; we all eat the same rice.

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