

# Team approach boosts human and environmental wellbeing

February 26 2015, by Glynis Smalley

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Even seemingly intractable problems such as the antibiotic crisis and the obesity epidemic could be resolved by treating human health and society as an integral part of an ecosystem.

Renowned health and nutrition expert Professor Mark Wahlqvist of Monash University said the living world was by nature a collaborative enterprise rather than a competitive one.

"It is unhelpful to look at ourselves as discrete species as the interconnectedness of all things, animate and inanimate, becomes more apparent," he said.

In research published in the Asia Pacific Journal of *Clinical Nutrition*, Professor Wahlqvist says awareness is growing of the ecosystem-dependent nature of human health.

"The problem now faced is that ecosystems have been plundered in such an anthropocentric fashion that their sustainability is precarious and our health with it," he said.

Calling for a re-evaluation of many ecosystems, from the home, school and work-place to [health care](#), communication, transport and recreation, Professor Wahlqvist said we had become accustomed to blaming disease and dysfunction on one factor, or a small set of factors.

Such views had contributed to the rise of medications such as antibiotics,

as well as their probable imminent demise.

"We confront multiple-resistant microorganisms in farm animals and ourselves that no currently available antibiotic can eradicate, not least because of their misuse as growth promotants in livestock for human consumption," he said.

"Better ecosystem management is likely to be one of the few solutions available to this crisis."

Professor Wahlqvist also said more integrative approaches to [health](#)-care practice were required.

He canvasses such seemingly simple remedial measures as eating a varied and home-cooked diet that is largely derived from plants; walking 30 to 40 minutes a day; keeping a garden; and ensuring access to a natural environment. All can go a long way towards ensuring general [human health](#) and longevity plus environmental sustainability.

"A sense of ourselves as ecological creatures is needed, planning as families and communities to reduce environmental pressure, and maintain and renew ecosystems," he said.

"A whole global movement is needed to provide hope for future generations."

**More information:** The paper is available online:  
[apjcn.nhri.org.tw/server/APJCN/23/1/1.pdf](http://apjcn.nhri.org.tw/server/APJCN/23/1/1.pdf)

Provided by Monash University

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