

Research highlights the importance of a balanced diet for mental health

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An international study involving the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry of the University of Valencia, recently published in *The Lancet Psychiatry*, highlights the importance of nutrition for maintaining mental health. Lecturer of Psychiatry Vicent Balanzá has participated in this study.

Lecturer of Psychiatry Vicent Balanzá, also a psychiatrist at La Fe University Hospital, participated in the scientific review made by members of the International Society for Nutritional Psychiatry Research (ISNPR) on the importance, research and future of nutritional medicine, as "it has been proven that the quality of diet and the deficiencies in certain essential nutrients are determining factors for physical and mental health".

In fact, nutrition "has become a key factor for the high prevalence and incidence of very common mental diseases, such as depression. A balanced diet is as important in [psychiatry](#) as it is in other medical specialties such as cardiology or endocrinology", says Balanzá.

ISNPR is a scientific society founded in 2013, the purpose of which is to promote high-quality scientific research on the prevention and treatment of psychiatric disorders by means of nutritional interventions. Balanzá is a member of its executive committee and he claims that in order to supply optimum performance, the human brain "needs an adequate intake of key nutrients, such as polyunsaturated fatty acids Omega-3, essential amino acids, B-group vitamins (B12 and folate), vitamin D and

minerals like zinc, magnesium and iron. A balanced and high-quality diet, such as the Mediterranean, provides all of these, but in cases of deficiencies, nutritional supplements are advisable".

A broad approach to Psychiatry

With this publication in *The Lancet Psychiatry*, the world's experts in nutritional psychiatry propose a debate on the growing role of diet in psychiatry and mental health. "At the population level, we had scientific evidence that Mediterranean diet is associated with a lower risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cognitive impairment. Now we also know that it reduces the risk of depression. These are strong arguments to preserve a cultural –and wholesome– treasure that has been transmitted over time," says Vicent Balanzá.

Moreover, the aetiology of mental illnesses is extremely complex and, therefore, so is their treatment. "Expecting that anyone with [mental health](#) problems would recover only with medicines is a very limited view of reality. In our article we argue that the future of psychiatry requires a broader approach in which nutritional factors are essential in order to provide better health outcomes, functioning and quality of life", concludes the researcher.

Vicent Balanzá Martínez is an adjunct lecturer of Psychiatry at the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry at the University of Valencia since 2005 and is accredited as a lecturer. Since 2002 he has been working as a psychiatrist in the Mental Health Unit in Catarroja, which he coordinates. He is also researcher at the Centre for Biomedical Research in Mental Health Network (CIBERSAM).

His research lines focus on neurocognitive functioning in schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, as well as on interventions aimed at improving cognitive deficits. More recently, he has been concerned with the staging

models in bipolar disorder and with nutritional interventions (nutritional psychiatry). He has published over 50 scientific articles in international journals that have received more than a thousand citations and his Hirsch index is 19.

More information: "Nutritional Medicine as Mainstream in Psychiatry." *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 2(3), p. 271–274. DOI: [dx.doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366\(14\)00051-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(14)00051-0)

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