Race, ethnicity, and racism in the nutrition literature: an update for 2020

Christopher P Duggan,[1,2] Anura Kurpad,[3] Fatima C Stanford,[4] Bruno Sunguya,[5] and Jonathan C Wells[6]

[1]Center for Nutrition, Division of Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition, Boston Children's Hospital, Boston, MA, USA; [2]Department of Nutrition, Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health, Boston, MA, USA; [3]Department of Nutrition, St. John's Research Institute, St. John's National Academy of Health Sciences, Bangalore, India; [4]Department of Medicine, Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, MA, USA; [5]Directorate of Research and Publications, Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; and [6]Childhood Nutrition Research Centre, University College London, London, United Kingdom

"The field of nutrition, like other areas has commonly used 'race' to describe research participants and populations without the recognition that *race is a social, not a biologic construct.*"

Limitations in the Use of Race and Ethnicity Data
Reliance of race as a biological variable
Reliance on race as a variable and static value
Lack of clarity on methods used to categorize race
Use of race as a proxy for social class
Conflating Race and Ethnicity

"If race is not a valid biological concept, *how and why should we use this concept* in the scientific literature?"

"We recommend that biomedical researchers, especially those in the field of nutrition, abandon the use of racial categories to explain biologic phenomenon but instead *rely on a more comprehensive framework of ethnicity*; that authors consider not just race and ethnicity but many social determinants of health…"

Recommendations
Social determinants of health are not limited to race and ethnicity
When race or ethnicity are characterized, specify the method with which these classifications were made
Full descriptions of ethnic backgrounds may well include dietary pattern descriptions
Words matter

race

noun (1)

\ ˈrās \
plural **races**
Definition of *race*
(Entry 1 of 3)

1a : any one of the groups that humans are often divided into based on physical traits regarded as common among people of shared ancestry

2a: a group of living things considered as a category

3 biology **:** a group within a species that is distinguishable (as morphologically, genetically, or behaviorally) from others of the same species

Food for Thought…

1) How does the definition of race affect CEGIR related research outcomes?
2) What are potential confounders when we use race to define study populations in the OMEGA database?

Please see the "Diversity Corner" on CEGIR website for additional questions.

https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/race