

Epidemiology/Genetics Abstracts

Title: A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE ON IMPACT OF FLOUR FORTIFICATION WITH FOLIC ACID ON SBA PREVALENCE RATES

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Background: Many countries around the world are currently fortifying wheat flour with micronutrients including iron, folic acid, and other B vitamins. Fortification of flour with folic acid is being shown to be an effective, sustainable and cost-effective intervention to eliminate folate insufficiency and reduce the occurrence of spina bifida and anencephaly (SBA). There is solid evidence from developed countries that fortification works. This presentation will review what we know about folic acid fortification of wheat flour and why it is so important for the prevention of serious birth defects.

Method: Data from 4 countries will be presented to examine blood folate levels, birth defects monitoring data and cost effectiveness analyses of wheat flour fortification with folic acid.

Results: Significant improvement occurred in population blood folate levels after fortification. Data from birth defects monitoring systems before and after the implementation of the flour fortification programs showed substantial reductions in the birth of babies affected with SBA. Cost effectiveness analyses showed significant cost savings of national fortification programs

Conclusion: Data collected from the United States, Canada, Costa Rica, and Chile show that eliminating population folate insufficiencies can be an important, cost effective means to contribute to the reduction of the global burden of serious birth defects like spina bifida and anencephaly.