Promoting Innovation in Pediatric Nutrition

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Truly impactful innovation can only be recognized in retrospect. Moreover, almost by definition, developing algorithmic paths on roadmaps for innovation are likely to be unsuccessful because innovators do not generally follow established routes. Nonetheless, environments can be established within Departments of Pediatrics that promote innovating thinking. There are several environmental factors necessary to do so: (1) demand that academic Pediatrics departments function in an aggressively scholarly mode; (2) capture the most fundamental science in postnatal developmental biology; (3) focus education and training on the boundaries of our knowledge, rather than the almost exclusive attention to what we think we already know; (4) devote mentoring, time and resources to only the most compelling unanswered questions in the pediatric sciences, including nutrition; (5) accept only systematic, evidence-based answers to clinical questions; (6) if systematic, evidence-based data are not available, design the proper studies to get them; (7) prize questioning the answers to further move beyond the knowledge limit; (8) support the principle that experiments in children will be required to convincingly answer clinical questions important to children, and (9) establish the multicenter resources in pediatric scientist training, clinical study design and implementation, and laboratory and instrument technologies required to answer today’s questions with tomorrow’s methods.