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MALNUTRITION CONNECTION

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New Diversity of Research Methods Paper could Benefit Development Federal Older Adult Nutrition Research Agenda

The [National Strategy](#) from the recent [White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, & Health](#) had the commitment that the Health and Human Services' Administration on Community Living (ACL) is developing an **older adult Nutrition Research Agenda**. Specifically, the Agenda will involve federal and external partners to identify gaps in existing research regarding food insecurity, hunger, malnutrition, and behavioral health issues in order to develop a long-term framework for advancing the quality of services, establishing research priorities and creating impactful policies." Including malnutrition in the older adult Nutrition Research Agenda builds on a recommendation about the need for more federal malnutrition research, that was part of Defeat Malnutrition Today's [National Blueprint](#).

Research comes in all shapes and sizes. However, it seems that all too often in nutrition, honest differences of opinion or differences in data are cast more as conflicts vs. alternatives. To this end, a recent white paper, [Valuing the Diversity of Research Methods to Advance Nutrition Science](#), from the American Society of Nutrition highlights the importance that all methods used in nutrition research contribute to the discipline, from cell culture and animal models to human clinical and epidemiological research. The paper further explains that when various research approaches are used as intended, realistic conclusions can be drawn from them. Greater collaborative efforts within the field of nutrition science will require an understanding that each method or approach has a place and function that should be valued and used together.

The white paper, while primarily written for nutrition researchers, provides a window into the strengths and limitations of adjacent research fields. The goal is that by promoting accurate, transparent, verifiable evidence-based communication about nutrition science we can improve the public's perception and trust of nutrition research. This is important given only [24%](#) of Americans indicate nutrition scientists provide fair and accurate accounts of their work. In the future, ASN plans to expand the white paper into a document useful for the various audiences who translate nutrition research, including journalists, clinicians, and policymakers.

Recognizing the value and limitations of well-executed nutrition science, as well as appreciation of how different studies can build on each other will support better communication of the results and their meaning. This synergy is imperative to making informed decisions in policy development and implementation and can bring benefit as ACL develops the older adult Nutrition Research Agenda.

