

A COMPUTER PACKAGE FOR NUTRITION EDUCATORS

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Computer aids for the nutrition educator and counsellor are under-developed. In individual and group clinical education and counselling a particular need exists for aids which can assist clients to understand the origins and effects of their personal food habit problems, so they may assume a more active and effective role in routine self-care.

In our research on food choice and health status, we have used a number of computer programs as aids to provide clients with:

- (a) objective analyses of diet record (Zed et al. 1977), exercise pattern (Bell and Stewart 1981) and personal mortality risk (Gordon et al. 1976) which give information about a client's food and health problem that is relevant, specific and motivational, and
- (b) opportunities for Reflective Learning (based on Personal Construct Theory/Repertory Grid technique (Shaw et al. 1978)) for the purpose of solving problems of inappropriate food choice.

We have combined these programs into an operational package and developed a protocol for its use by the nutritionist to characterise client dietary problems, to counsel for the resolution of these problems, and to monitor treatment progress.

The package is currently being evaluated as an aid to counselling diabetic and obese clients for the resolution of problems encountered in achieving diet modification.

Preliminary evaluation in the hospital setting has been sufficiently encouraging to warrant the adaptation of the package to a portable microcomputer which can be used for nutrition education and counselling in the health centre or home.

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