

Congruence of red meat descriptors reported by a group of elderly volunteers and those found in an Australian nutrient database

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The role of red meat in the Australian diet has been the subject of substantial interest in both academic and industry circles (1) with further research expanding nutrition knowledge and its applications. However, in studies of dietary habits the issue of accuracy of assessments warrants attention. Some of the problems relate to discrepancies between consumer accounts of foods consumed and the descriptors used in food databases. The aim of this paper is to describe the categories of red meat reported by elderly subjects in a trial involving red meat consumption, and to identify potential sources of error in using this data as the basis for intervention.

Thirty four elderly adults (mean age 68.1 years, range 61–80 yrs) volunteered to participate in an intervention trial with 3 dietitians undertaking a detailed open ended diet history interview where subjects described their eating patterns in everyday terms (2). A checklist was included at the end of the interview, summarizing meat types, amounts and frequency of consumption. Participants reported 5, 4 and 1 main categories of beef, lamb and veal respectively. Within the beef and lamb categories there were a further 15 and 7 sub-categories respectively. The 3 main categories reported were rump steak, mince (with ‘premium’ regularly used as a qualifier) and short loin lamb chops. Participants reportedly consumed meat at dinner in the evening at home, with the exception of one male who ate lunches at clubs twice a week and another who chose meat pie for lunch once a week. Five individuals and 3 couples reported consuming small amounts of cold meats (60 g) at the lunch meal 1–3 times per week and only one subject reported eating meat in a takeaway breakfast twice a week. The AUSNUT (ANZFA, 1999) database in the Foodworks nutrient analysis software program (version 3.00, 2002. Xyris software, Brisbane) indicated 12 options for rump steak: 3 raw and 9 cooked (3 fried, 3 grilled, 3 non-specified, NS), and each with fat descriptors of fat trimmed, lean & fat, and NS fat trimmed. If barbecued rump steak were itemized a potential difference of 6 g fat and 300 kJ could result from the average serve of the study sample if the fat specification were not accurately determined.

Volunteers for our dietary study generally reported meat categories congruent with descriptors in the current database. Three quarters reported consuming mixed dishes and all but 2 gave some description of fat removal. This and the relative stability of their eating patterns appear to reflect the age of the group. Nevertheless, the risk of measurement error still lies with elucidating recipes for mixed dishes, and in the accurate assessment of the fat content in consumed meats.

Beef descriptors					Lamb descriptors				Veal descriptors
Grilled	Mince	Roast	Cuts	Boiled	Chops	Roast	Fillet	Liver	Fillet
Rump	Premium	Topside	Blade	Corned beef	Shortloin	Leg	Lamb fillet	Lamb’s fry	Snitzel
Fillet	Sausage	Sirloin	Chuck		Foreqtr	Joint			
T-bone	Rissoles	B Blade	Topside		Cutlets				
Sirloin	Meat pie								

References

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Supported by: Meat and Livestock Australia

Key words: dietary assessment, nutrient databases, food descriptors