

MANAGING NUTRITION IN INSTITUTIONALISED HANDICAPPED CHILDREN**C. PATTERSON, C. REILLY AND J. APPLETON**

The literature regarding specific recommendations of dietary requirements for children with mental and/or physical handicaps is somewhat confusing and conflicting. This does not however preclude collecting data to determine whether general principles of good nutrition are being followed.

The aim of the present project was therefore to assess the daily nutritional intake of children resident in a centre for mentally/physically handicapped children, to observe the process of feeding the children and to collect data on the efficiency of the operation in terms of meal provision. Data on the children's intake (four children 1-3 years of age, 15 children 4-6 years old and 15 children 7-12 years old) were collected by observation and recording by three researchers of what the children actually ate on three non consecutive days. Estimates of wastage were made by recording amounts and types of foods arriving at the dining rooms and subsequently the amounts of unserved food being disposed of. Random holding temperatures were also recorded. The daily menu was outlined by kitchen staff on a four week rotating basis with other staff adding to this basic menu.

Preliminary calculations indicated that on average fifty percent of the food was not served to the children. Initial estimates of the children's intakes were completed using a standard number of serves of variable size for each age group. The 1-3 year old group consumed two serves of the bread/cereal group, five serves of fruit and vegetables, six serves of dairy products and just under two serves of meat products. The older groups of children showed a similar consumption pattern. Use of this method of using serving sizes has been compared with a complete dietary analysis using Diet-1 (Xyris Software). Energy posed the greatest problem with correlating serves of the different food groups with the recommended allowance. It is therefore necessary to use a similar scheme to that proposed by Baghurst et al.(1990) to improve the correlation. Whether the Recommended Dietary Allowances are appropriate for this group of children would require further anthropometric data being collected.

Recommendations have been made for increasing the consumption of the bread/creal group by increasing use of pasta, rice and bread. Strategies involving greater communication between staff have been implemented for menu design, food ordering and food preparation in order to decrease wastage. The success of these strategies is undergoing continuous evaluation.

BAGHURST, K.I., HERTZLER, A. RECORD, S. and SPURR, C. (1990). Proc. Nutr. Soc. Aust. 15: 162.

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