

## DEVELOPMENT OF A NUTRITION MANUAL FOR MEDICAL STUDENTS

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There has been continuing concern regarding the adequacy of nutrition education in undergraduate medical curricula in Australia. In response to this concern, the University of New South Wales (UNSW) medical faculty appointed a co-ordinator of nutrition teaching to review the status of nutrition in its curriculum. Among her recommendations was the development of a nutrition manual for medical students (Judd 1990).

The aim of the manual was to provide a resource which increases the awareness and knowledge of nutrition, and its role in both the treatment and prevention of disease and the promotion of health. It was designed as a practical solution to many of the difficulties in implementing nutrition teaching into the medical curriculum such as lack of adequately trained personnel, space and identity in the curriculum, and resources. It was also designed to encourage students to develop a self-directed approach towards nutrition which concurs with the recommendations of the Doherty report into medical education (Committee of Inquiry into Medical Education and Medical Workforce 1988).

Topics included in the manual were:

- Nutrition topics of importance for the UNSW medical curriculum
- Nutritional assessment
- Common nutrition related disorders - aetiology and management
- Groups at risk of poor nutrition
- Nutrition information and misinformation
- Nutrition resources

The list of important nutrition topics for the UNSW medical curriculum was determined by surveying faculty, general practitioners, dietitians and interns. The other topics were chosen following a literature review, the survey described above, and because of their relevance to a wide variety of subjects in the medical curriculum and practicality to tasks performed by both medical students and practising doctors.

The manual was distributed to all UNSW medical students in 1991. From 1992, it will be distributed to first year students on an annual basis. There has been strong interest in the manual as a basic nutrition resource from general practitioners, medical specialists, other health professionals and nutritional scientists. An evaluation of the manual, both as a nutrition resource, and its efficacy as a self instructional tool is planned.

**COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY INTO MEDICAL EDUCATION AND MEDICAL WORKFORCE (1988).** 'Australian Medical Education and workforce into the 21st century' (Australian Government Publishing Service: Canberra).  
**JUDD, H.L. (1990).** 'Nutrition teaching in undergraduate medical education: a crossdisciplinary approach' (University of New South Wales: Sydney).

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