

COMPUTER ASSISTED DIET INTERVIEW METHOD

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A demonstration was given via slides of some of the sequences in an interactive computer-based interview developed at the Computer Medicine Laboratory at Beth Israel Hospital in Boston, Mass. Built specifically for probing the dietary habits of persons with hyperlipidemia, the program obtains a dietary history, food frequency, 24-hour recall and usual food intake.

The program begins with an instructional sequence that teaches rudiments of interaction with the computer and establishes the user's identity. The generalized history contains questions about dieting experience, activity and exercise, weight history and food likes and dislikes. The food frequency focuses on foods of high fat, saturated fat and cholesterol content, specifically grouped into meats, dairy, bakery foods and added fats.

The program prompts the listing and quantitation of all foods eaten for meals and snacks during the previous 24 hours and for a 'usual' day. Menu terms are used as components from which foods are identified and the 'conversation' proceeds from general to specific food items. Quantitation is obtained as are any additions or complements to any food. Opportunity is given to further describe meals or main dishes if the 'usual' meal is felt to inadequately characterize food intake.

A summary is compiled which coordinates the history into a detailed topical outline and narrative. Foods reported for both the 24-hour and usual day are printed showing each item, its portion size and nutrient values. Calculations show sub-totals for each meal or snack and for the total day. The record thereby becomes an informational document about nutrient value of foods. A comparison is made between nutrients for the usual day and dietary goals as established by the American Heart Association.

Additionally, a direct retrieval system, Quick Input of Food, was demonstrated via slides. Information in the data base, constructed from Handbook #8 series and other governmental and research sources is accessible without coding and has been useful in computing nutrient values of food records, recipes, and for obtaining 24-hour recalls by direct interview. The print-out records total and average values for calories; protein; carbohydrates; fat; saturated, monounsaturated, and polyunsaturated fatty acids; cholesterol; sodium and potassium. A distribution of calories is shown and P/S ratio is calculated.

Discussion and questions focused on issues of compatibility and non-compatibility of several soft- and hardware systems, cost estimates and applicability of self-administered programs to various educational levels and ethnic groups.