

What Do The Next Ten Years Hold For Nutrition Monitoring?

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The passage of the National Nutrition Monitoring and Related Research (NNMRR) Act in October of 1990 had broad-based support from nutrition and health professionals based in part on the perception -- and some would argue the fact -- of the need for enhanced coordination of nutrition monitoring activities among Federal and State agencies. One of the major purposes of the act was to improve coordination and to provide a central focus for all Federal agencies conducting nutrition monitoring and related research.

The law required the establishment of an Interagency Board for Nutrition Monitoring and Related Research. This Board was established in March of 1991 and is co-chaired by the Assistant Secretary for Health, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), and the Assistant Secretary for Food and Consumer Services, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Membership includes agencies that either conduct nutrition monitoring surveys or are major users of the data, 7 agencies each from USDA and DHHS and a variety of other agencies including the Department of Defense, Department of Education, Environmental Protection Agency, Agency for International Development, Department of Veterans Affairs, Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and National Marine Fisheries Service.

The Board's technical focus is defined in three Working Groups tasked with special assignments. The Working Group on Survey Comparability is defining common demographic descriptors that can be used across all surveys in the National Nutrition Monitoring Program as well as for incorporation into state and local surveys. The Working Group on Food Composition Data is working to improve the specificity in the nutrient data bases used for surveys including the option of adding brand names into the database. The Federal-State Relations Working Group--which stands for Federal-State Relations and Information, Dissemination and Exchange -- perhaps has the most challenging task of all--to improve information exchange regarding nutrition monitoring. Sessions on the National Nutrition Monitoring Program will continue to be offered to the program planning committee of future National Nutrient Databank Conferences. Interchange with participants provides opportunities for Program sharing and growth.

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The Interagency Board meets quarterly to oversee the development of publications and numerous reports. These include:

- Scientific reports on the nutritional status of the U.S. population to be developed by non-government scientific experts. We are planning the next report in 1995.
- The Directory of Federal and State Nutrition Monitoring Activities. This publication includes a brief description of all surveys and surveillance activities in the Nutrition Monitoring Program along with a contact person and phone number. The second edition of The Directory will be released in the fall of 1992 and thereafter, it will be updated and published every 3 years.
- Between releases of the scientific reports, we plan to publish a chartbook that will include user-friendly graphic presentations of data from across the Nutrition Monitoring Program. The first chartbook will be published in the fall of 1993 with emphasis on data of population subgroups at nutritional risk.

In addition to these technical reports, the Board coordinates biennial reports to Congress on the progress of activities of the Nutrition Monitoring Program. Finally, the Board coordinates annual budget reports to Congress on the money spent on nutrition monitoring by the Federal agencies that sit on the Interagency Board. The first budget report to Congress estimates that the Federal government expects to spend \$156.5 million on nutrition monitoring and related research in fiscal year 1992.

To provide outside technical advice to and evaluation of the Nutrition Monitoring Program, the law required establishment of the National Nutritional Monitoring Advisory Council with representation of public health, nutrition monitoring research, and food production and distribution expertise.

There are nine members on the Advisory Council. Five members are appointed by President Bush. They are David Call, Shiriki Kumanyika, Suzanne Harris, Charles James, III, and Helen Lee. Four members are appointed by Congress. They are Lynn Parker appointed by Senator Mitchell, Sue Greig appointed by Senator Dole, Marlene Marshall appointed by Representative Michel, and Sheryl Lee appointed by Representative Foley.

The Council's major responsibilities are providing guidance, evaluating the 10-Year Plan, providing recommendations, and reporting annually to the Secretaries of USDA and DHHS. The Council held three meetings in Washington D.C. in 1992. Their meetings are open to the public.

I believe the most important requirements of the Nutrition Monitoring Act was the development of the Ten-Year Comprehensive Plan for Nutrition Monitoring and

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Related Research. A draft plan was developed and published in the Federal Register for a 90-day public comment period October, 1991. In developing the Plan, outside input was sought in several forms including giving presentations at professional meetings; sending the draft plan to over 1000 individuals who requested a copy; and formally soliciting almost 100 professional, scientific, and consumer interest groups for comments.

The draft Plan has been revised taking into consideration the 53 public comments received and transmitted by President Bush to Congress in January 1993. The Plan will be published in the Federal Register and will also be available on HNIS's Nutrient Databank Bulletin Board. Key points of the Plan's design include:

- providing breadth and thoroughness to advancing the science of nutrition monitoring by defining over 70 activities and projects to be completed over the next decade,
- assuring accountability and responsiveness of the Federal sector to meet the needs of data users by identifying responsible agencies for the work and yearly reports of progress in completing the activities, and
- enhancing continuing dialogue among governmental, private and academia communities to evolve a relevant and responsive Nutrition Monitoring Program through specific projects.

The NNMRR Act and more specifically the Ten-Year Plan has laid out an ambitious undertaking for improving nutrition monitoring with food composition and nutrient data bases as one of the five component areas. I believe it provides an excellent start to the next 100 years in food composition.