



Protein  
Vitamin  
A

Calcium  
Iron  
Minerals




Zinc  
Vitamin  
B<sub>12</sub>

Iodine  
Niacin  
Riboflavin

Thiamine  
Vitamin  
C

**Nutrition**

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# Do you know what your patients eat?

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The evidence presented in this report suggests that dietary patterns may be poor in the majority of patients visiting doctors' offices. One must, therefore, wonder how much more significant diet may be than generally held in the etiology of many allegedly non-dietary syndromes. Subsequent reports will re-examine these data in terms of age and sex, and the clinical significance will be considered.

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## Introduction

A number of estimates of the dietary patterns in the United States are readily available. For example, according to the United States Department of Agriculture,<sup>1</sup> approximately one out of two Americans is consuming a suboptimal diet. As far as the authors can determine, no one has ever reported the dietary habits of patients who seek assistance, for whatever reason, from a health practitioner (physician, dentist, osteopath, chiropractor). The purpose of this report is to determine the nutritional value of routine patients' diets.

## Method of Investigation

Computer Laboratory Services, Incorporated (Post Office Box 34600, Dallas, Texas 75234), provides a dietary analysis service (Dietronics) for private practitioners based on a computerized food frequency questionnaire. This study is derived from their data bank of 15,050 such analyses performed on individuals who visited private offices where the practitioner felt, for whatever reason, that a dietary analysis should be undertaken. For purposes of this portion of the study, two items will be reported: first, the number and percentage of subjects consuming less than the recommended dietary allowance<sup>2</sup> for one to 17 nutrients; second, the number and percentage of subjects not consuming the recommended dietary allowance for each of the 17 nutrients.

## Results

Table 1 summarizes the number and percentage of subjects consuming less than the recommended daily dietary allowance (RDA) for one or more of the 17 nutrients for which the RDA has been designated. It is shocking that 84% of the subjects are consuming suboptimal diets with regard to one or more of the 17 nutrients evaluated.

Table 2 summarizes the percentage of subjects consuming less than the RDA for specific nutrients. The percentages below the RDA range from 77.6 for folacin to 5.7 for vitamin C.

## Discussion

It is obvious from the data presented in Tables 1 and 2 that people who seek the assistance of health professionals display poor dietary habits as

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judged by traditional norms. Unfortunately, not many patients are queried as to what they eat. On the other hand, the doctors who do not concern themselves with what their patients eat are quick to reply that their patients' problems do not have a nutritional origin. Instead, they treat these patients as though they were suffering from a deficiency of one or more of the commonly prescribed medications.

Since all chemical reactions in the body are controlled by enzymes which are made of amino acids, vitamins, and trace minerals, it is imperative that attention be directed to the alarming diet habits

of patients who seek healing from health professionals.

Failure to include diet and nutrition in the prescription for healing constitutes gross negligence. ■

#### References

1. United States Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service, *Food Consumption of Households in the United States*, Washington, DC, United States Government Printing Office, Reports 1-5, 1968.
2. Food and Nutrition Board, National Research Council—National Academy of Sciences, *Recommended Dietary Allowances*, 8th ed, Washington, DC, National Academy of Sciences, 1974.

**Table 1**

Percentage of 15,050 subjects not meeting the RDA for 1 to 17 nutrients as determined from the food frequency questionnaire data bank of Computer Laboratory Services, Incorporated

| Number of Nutrients | Number of Subjects | Percentage of Subjects |
|---------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| 1                   | 12,674             | 84.2                   |
| 2                   | 11,801             | 78.4                   |
| 3                   | 10,870             | 72.2                   |
| 4                   | 9,908              | 65.8                   |
| 5                   | 8,905              | 59.2                   |
| 6                   | 7,887              | 52.4                   |
| 7                   | 6,879              | 45.7                   |
| 8                   | 5,935              | 39.4                   |
| 9                   | 5,083              | 33.8                   |
| 10                  | 4,285              | 28.5                   |
| 11                  | 3,522              | 23.4                   |
| 12                  | 2,707              | 18.0                   |
| 13                  | 2,001              | 13.3                   |
| 14                  | 1,394              | 9.3                    |
| 15                  | 930                | 6.2                    |
| 16                  | 578                | 3.8                    |
| 17                  | 253                | 1.7                    |

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**Table 2**

Percentage of 15,050 subjects not meeting the RDA for specific nutrients as determined by the food frequency questionnaire data bank of Computer Laboratory Services, Incorporated

| Nutrients                   | Number of Subjects | Percentage of Subjects |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| 1. folacin                  | 11,672             | 77.6                   |
| 2. zinc                     | 10,379             | 69.0                   |
| 3. calories                 | 8,250              | 54.8                   |
| 4. iodine                   | 7,493              | 49.8                   |
| 5. vitamin E                | 6,823              | 45.3                   |
| 6. magnesium                | 6,642              | 44.1                   |
| 7. calcium                  | 6,462              | 42.9                   |
| 8. vitamin B <sub>6</sub>   | 6,083              | 40.4                   |
| 9. iron                     | 5,647              | 37.5                   |
| 10. vitamin B <sub>1</sub>  | 5,100              | 33.9                   |
| 11. niacin                  | 4,114              | 27.3                   |
| 12. vitamin B <sub>2</sub>  | 2,749              | 18.3                   |
| 13. vitamin A               | 1,676              | 11.1                   |
| 14. phosphorus              | 1,380              | 9.2                    |
| 15. vitamin B <sub>12</sub> | 1,359              | 9.0                    |
| 16. protein                 | 1,113              | 7.4                    |
| 17. vitamin C               | 862                | 5.7                    |

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