

QA1 – Nutrient Analysis Software

QUESTION:

Our agency is reviewing software for nutrient analysis. Currently, we are looking at Nutritionist 5, Food Processor III and Food Works. Do you have any comments or suggestions regarding these softwares?

ANSWER:

The ideal nutrient analysis program will depend on what it will be used for. For example, are close-to-exact values for specific food components needed or will a general idea of nutrient intake suffice? Other questions to ask before selecting a program include:

- Does the database contain all of the foods and nutrients of interest?
- Are many special products used in clients' food patterns?
- Is the database complete for the nutrients of interest? (Some databases specify true zeros and missing data, some simply list zero when data is not available.)
- Is the database kept up to date? Are manufacturers contacted routinely for new information on product changes? Is this information available to you? What is the cost of these updates?
- Can special foods and formulas be added to the database?
- Are portion sizes listed in the database similar to portion sizes you will use? (e.g., grams versus tablespoons)
- Is technical support available? What is the cost of technical support? Is technical support available during convenient times?

Nutritionist Five includes >15,000 foods and ingredients and 500 recipes. Data is supplied by the USDA Release Number 12 and by food manufacturers. The database is updated regularly and the program design staff includes RDs. The program tracks over 80 nutrients and food characteristics. In addition, the program features client tracking, recipe analysis, and menu planning. Users can edit the database by adding foods or modifying existing data. The program costs \$595 and includes 1 year of technical support and database updates. Technical support is \$300/year after the first year. More information can be found at the company's website:

<http://www.firstdatabank.com/nutrition/index.html>

Nutritionist Four list values for several amino acids as absolute zero instead of a symbol for missing data. Data for more common nutrients is likely more complete. The technical support is limited and it took several calls to answer a question.

Food Processor includes 22,000 food items and 130 nutrients. Features include fitness and weight management planning, recipe/menu planning, and nutrient analysis. The database is comprised of information from USDA datasets, food manufacturers and scientific journal articles. New foods can be added to the database. The DOS/Windows version is \$549 and includes one year of technical support. A sample of the program

with 100 food database is available. More information can be found at the company's website: <http://www.esha.com>

FoodWorks 2.0 includes 15,000 foods, with information from USDA Release 12 and food manufacturers. Eighty four nutrients and food components are included. Foods can be added to the database. A single copy of the program is \$199.95, and technical support is free for the current version. The software is available free of charge for 30 days. More information can be found at the company's website: <http://www.xyris.com.au/>. A list of analysis programs, with links to specific companies can be found at <http://nutrition.miningco.com/msub19.htm?pid=2756&cob=home>

References:

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- 2) Chausmer, A. Nutrition Analysis Software. Medical Software Reviews. 1996; 5(3). Http: www.healthcarecomputing.com.
- 3) Lee RD, et al. Comparison of Eight Microcomputer Analysis Programs with the USDA Nutrient Data Base for Standard Reference. JADA. 1995; 95: 858-67.