

DIETARY DEFICIENCIES ARE OBSERVED IN NUTRITION STUDY

-TOPICS-

"Adolescents and Their Food: Changes Through Nutrition Education and School Lunch" is the title of the Nutrition Study conducted by Professors Doris Anderson and Estelle Reddin of the Department of Home Economics.

The study deals with school lunch and nutrition education as influences on adolescent food behaviour. The experimental phase was carried out in January and February of 1976 in six junior high schools in the province.

Students completed a series of questionnaires on personal and family background, nutrition knowledge and attitudes, food preferences and food intake during the school day. Of the 938 students surveyed, 45 per cent were in Grade 8 and 55 per cent were in Grade 9. The median age was 14 years. There were slightly more males than females.

Two experimental schools were selected, one receiving a specific nutrition education unit, and the other receiving the same nutrition education unit in combination with a school lunch program. The nutrition education program emphasized consumption of milk, fruits and vegetables as these were the problem areas identified by a preliminary study conducted in 1975.

The study investigated the adequacy of the dietary intake of the students during the school day. Analysis of the food intakes revealed that the intake of calories, calcium iron and vitamin C were low. Approximately one-third of the students had caloric intakes in the inadequate category, (less than the two-thirds of the recommended amounts for this age group.) Fifty-eight percent of the males and forty-seven percent of the females had calcium intakes in the same category.

A dietary deficit of iron in females was apparent, 57 percent receiving inadequate amounts, compared to 27 percent for the males. The mean intake of vitamin C, although within the adequate category, was

distorted by a few extreme cases and does not reflect the finding that 44 percent of the males and 30 percent of the females had inadequate intakes.

An overall evaluation reveals the poor dietary intake of the population studied, with 75 percent of both males and females having diets rated as inadequate, (with an inadequate intake of one or more nutrients). Study findings thus far indicate that intervention by the combined

nutrition education and school lunch program did effect an increase in milk consumption, and a trend toward improvement in meal pattern scores.

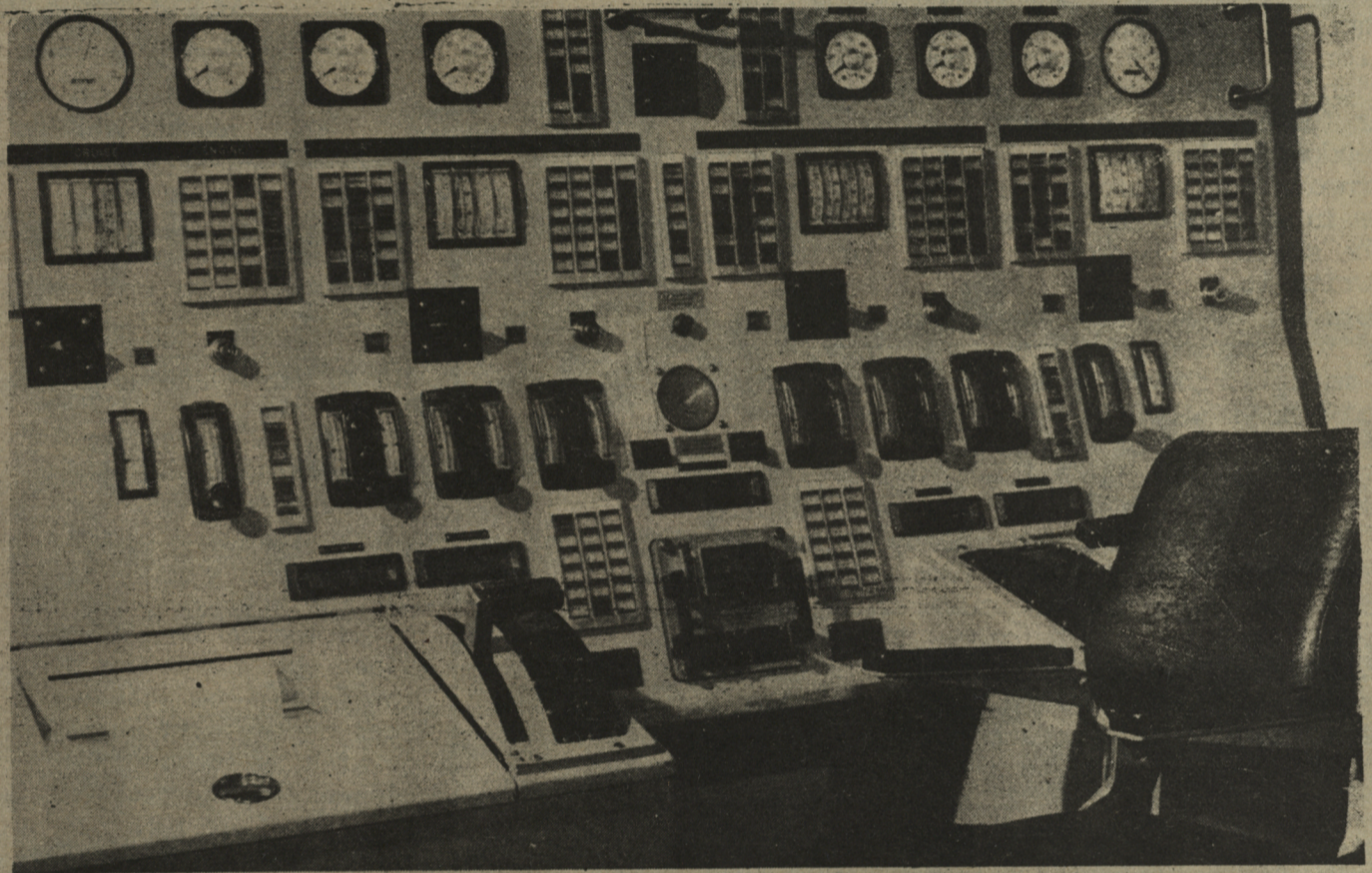
Other aspects of food behaviour under study are nutrition knowledge, hunger, peer group influence, body image and attitudes toward food and nutrition.

Initial reports of the study now completed are: Report 1, Findings and Implications of Preliminary Study; Report 2, Conceptual Framework and

Methodology; and Report 3, Situational and Behavioural Characteristics of Students.

These are the first of a series of 12 reports to be released in the spring. In addition, a slide-tape presentation has been prepared and is available to students, parents, teachers and interested groups.

The study has been conducted with financial support of Health and Welfare Canada, Health Programs Branch.

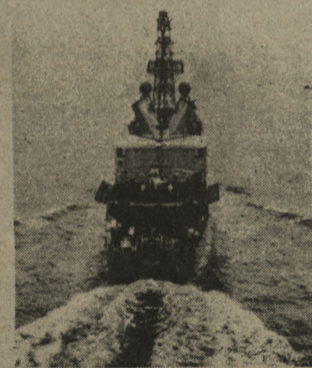


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