

research in brief

Media Effectiveness

A study conducted in North Carolina measured the effectiveness of three media: (1) information leaflets, (2) circular letters, and (3) cartoon booklets in disseminating basic foods and nutrition information to low-income homemakers. It also examined the relationships between knowledge and practice change, as well as personal and situational characteristics of the respondents.

Descriptive and experimental designs were used in the study. A pretest-treatment-posttest design was used for the experimental part of the study. Eighteen counties in North Carolina were randomly selected for inclusion in the study. A sample of 48 homemakers from the lists of EFNEP enrollees were selected and 12 were randomly assigned to the 3 experimental groups and control group in each county. Six concepts from the food and nutrition areas were selected and each week for 6 weeks the groups received the same concept in different media, that is, Group 1, leaflet each week; Group 2, circular letter each week; Group 3, cartoon each week; Group 4, control group.

The data were analyzed using "least squares analysis of variance" with the accompanying tests.

The major findings were: (1) all experimental groups, as well as the control group, showed significant changes in foods and nutrition knowledge and practices; (2) no one of the media was significantly more effective than another in effecting changes in food and nutrition knowledge; (3) the greatest changes in food and nutrition practices occurred within the group that received the circular letter; (4) knowledge gain was found to be significantly related to certain aspects of geographical location of the respondents and to attitude toward the medium received; and (5) attitudes toward the three media were generally positive and significantly related to "ease of reading."

The findings of this study suggest that any one of all three media studied would be useful in disseminating educational information to the public and would be considerably

cheaper than face-to-face contacts or meetings now most often used by EFNEP aides across the country. Perhaps some combination of face-to-face contacts by the aides with more use of these media should be considered by EFNEP programs. The study also suggests Extension educators must be aware of and test the reading levels of materials for low-income audiences.

“The Effectiveness of Cartoon Booklets, Information Leaflets and Circular Letters in Disseminating Basic Foods and Nutrition Information to Low Income Families.” Staff Study AM-8. Curtis Trent, Rachel Kinlaw, and Frank Pintozi. Raleigh: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, May, 1977.

Phyllis E. Worden

Sam T. was a hard-working, long-houred, dedicated county agent. Observing his stair-step brood of 10, everyone noticed that Sam's family increase over the years had been greater percentagewise than the county's corn, soybean, and tobacco crops combined.

On this particular day, Mrs. T. had just about all she could manage. Sam wasn't in the best of spirits either, spending most of the day on the annual report. The kids all seated at the supper table in their senior to junior status positions began one of their better family discussions.

Just before the grand finale, Mrs. T. could stand no more and left the table with tears running down her cheeks. Immediately the screams ceased and silence prevailed, broken only after a long and remorseful pause by brood No. 7 who turned to her daddy and said, "Daddy, if Mommie doesn't return, can I have her meat?"

Extension is full of humor. If you have heard or had an experience yourself, send it on. It will fill a void in all our lives and a vacant space or two in the Journal.