UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
TWIN CITIES

Nutrition Coordinating Center (NCC)
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May 25, 1988

Henry Blackburn, M.D.
Division of Epidemiology
School of Public Health
Stadium Gate 27
611 Beacon Street SE
Minneapolis, MN 55414

Dear Dr. ~~Blackburn~~ Henry:

I greatly appreciate your willingness to write a letter in support of our five year NIH grant application for continuation of the NCC Nutrition Data System. Enclosed are copies of relevant sections from the grant proposal.

As described more fully in the attached materials, there are a number of features of the NCC Nutrition Data System that are unique compared with other systems for analyzing nutrient data. These features include the level of specificity for detailed food descriptions to accommodate precise analysis of dietary fats and other nutrients related to the major chronic diseases, the currency and completeness of the NCC nutrient database and coding system, the capability for reanalysis of data collected in the past using an updated version of the nutrient database, and the high level of standardization and quality control incorporated into all aspects of the coding and calculation system. No other nutrient analysis system provides these features which are critical for rigorous investigation of diet-disease relationships.

Maintenance of a nutrient calculation system in a rapidly expanding foods marketplace requires intensive effort. Routine maintenance of the NCC nutrient database involves systematic updating to incorporate new analytic data from the USDA, the literature and food manufacturers. Updating of brand name products includes not only the addition of the numerous new food products introduced on the market, but also updating to reflect new formulations of existing products which may affect the nutrient compositions of those products.

In addition to the maintenance of the nutrient database and calculation system, the NCC is at a critical stage in the development of an interactive micro-computer system for the standardized collection and automatic coding of dietary data. This system will greatly reduce the cost of collecting and analyzing dietary data as well as providing a level of standardization never before possible.

With the recent emphasis on dietary modification as a major component of health promotion and disease prevention, the resources available at the NCC are becoming increasingly valuable for the development of educational materials and intervention monitoring tools. For instance, educational materials to meet the needs of the National Cholesterol Education Program will require the level of specificity for fats, fatty acids and cholesterol provided by the NCC Nutrition Data System. And these materials will require continual updating to reflect the dynamic marketplace.

The NCC is working toward eventual self support. Currently, the users of the system support the data collection and processing of study data, but the updating of the database and a substantial portion of the development of the microcomputer system are supported by the NHLBI. We expect that by the end of the 5 year grant period, the number of users of the system will be considerably increased and that maintenance efforts will be supported by the users of the system. If support were to be withdrawn during this crucial time, the research community would lose a unique national resource which has been developed through substantial NIH investment over the past 14 years and which has been used by numerous NIH grantees and contractors. At present, the NCC is providing data collection and processing support for 27 research studies including a number of multicentered clinical trials, several of which are scheduled to continue until 1993 or beyond.

Please send your letter to me by June 20 in preparation for the June 30 site visit. The letters of support from the scientific community will be included as part of the materials provided to the Review Group. Let me know if you would like me to send any additional information or a full copy of the grant application.

Sincerely,

Marilyn

I. Marilyn Buzzard, Ph.D., R.D.
Director

IMB:mjr

Enclosure

DESCRIPTION: State the application's broad, long-term objectives and specific aims, making reference to the health relatedness of the project. Describe concisely the experimental design and methods for achieving these goals. Avoid summaries of past accomplishments and the use of the first person. This abstract is meant to serve as a succinct and accurate description of the proposed work when separated from the application. DO NOT EXCEED THE SPACE PROVIDED.

The Nutrition Coordinating Center (NCC) at the University of Minnesota maintains a highly standardized Nutrition Data System for collecting and analyzing dietary data at a level of specificity required by studies investigating relationships between diet and disease. The major objectives of this application are: to provide a continually updated dietary data collection and analysis system which reflects the rapidly changing foods marketplace and expanding research interests; to take advantage of technological advances to improve the accuracy and efficiency of data processing and system maintenance; to meet the increasing demands of research and clinical counseling through the development of dietary assessment and intervention tools including a microcomputer-based system providing interactive data collection and automatic coding and calculation of food intake data; and to conduct research projects designed to evaluate various components of the NCC Nutrition Data System. Evaluation projects include the assessment of the validity and reliability of procedures for imputing nutrient data; comparison of successive versions of the NCC nutrient database to determine overall impact of nutrient updates on nutrient calculations; validation of the NCC Nutrition Data System by comparison of nutrient calculations with chemical analysis of food intakes; comparison of the microcomputer-based system with the current on-line coding and mainframe-based calculation system; and clinical testing and evaluation of the microcomputer system. The capacity of the NCC to serve as a national and international resource center for nutrition research and education will be enhanced through a formative evaluation to assess user needs, improved methods of retrieving information from NCC resources, conducting a national workshop on diet assessment methodology, and increasing the visibility of the Nutrition Data System through publications in professional journals and presentations and demonstrations at professional meetings. An Advisory Committee will be convened annually to provide direction in establishing priorities for NCC activities.

KEY PERSONNEL ENGAGED ON PROJECT

NAME, DEGREE(S), SSN	POSITION TITLE AND ROLE IN PROJECT	DEPARTMENT AND ORGANIZATION
		University of Minnesota
I. Marilyn Buzzard, Ph.D. 160-28-2758	Assistant Professor and Director, Nutrition Coordinating Center; Principal Investigator	Division of Human Development & Nutrition, School of Public Health
John H. Himes, Ph.D. 528-62-6922	Associate Professor and Head, Division of Human Development and Nutrition; Co-Investigator	Same
Bruce H. Sielaff, Ph.D. 469-46-5381	Research Associate; Co-Investigator	Same
Rebecca M. Mullis, Ph.D. 240-78-6504	Assistant Professor; Co-Investigator	Same