REVIEW AND UPDATE OF THE 1994 FOOD EXCHANGE LISTS FOR MEAL PLANNING

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Background:
The Food Exchange List (FEL) classify weighed food items into seven groups with approximately similar macronutrient contents. The FEL is a tool used for people with normal healthy diets, those on therapeutic diets, and to facilitate diet counseling. The first Philippine FEL was published by Corpus in 1953 and revised by Tanchoco in 1994. The need for an updated FEL emerged with the advent of novel foods and products that can influence the lifestyle and eating habits of individuals.

Objectives:
This study aimed to update the 1994 Food Exchange List (FEL) based on the current needs of the users.

Methods:
This is a cross-sectional research study using both survey and focus group discussions (FGDs) to gather qualitative and quantitative data among professional nutritionist-dietitians. The survey and FGDs were conducted in selected regions in the country. The re-computation and re-validation of macronutrient contents of foods were primarily based on the 2016 Philippine Food Composition Tables (FCTs). Six core nutrition consultants formed part of the expert panel to further improve the technical contents of FEL. This study was approved by the FNRI Institutional Ethics and Review Committee.

Results and Findings:
A total of 529 questionnaires were retrieved from the survey. More than half of survey respondents were from NCR and two-thirds were professional nutritionist-dietitians. Survey and FGD results were similar, wanting more food items included, particularly new foods available in the market. The same food groups were retained as the previous FEL. However, the vegetable list was reduced to one, whereas the rice list was reclassified into three subgroups based on the protein content. Some foods were regrouped and renamed based on recomputed macronutrient contents. Overall, more than 700 food items were validated and measured per exchange portion and with selected food photos included to visualize exchange portion sizes.

Conclusion and Recommendation:
The revised FEL incorporated novel foods, updated serving portion per exchange and revised two major food groups, the vegetable and the rice groups. An evaluation of its effectiveness on disease management and clinical outcome is recommended.