

CD-ROM review

Topics in International Health, Nutrition. The Wellcome Trust. Wallingford, Oxon and New York: CABI Publishing (email for UK publishing@cabi.org, for USA cabi-nao@cabi.org). £45 (US\$80).

System requirements: 486 DX2 or better, PC with Windows 95, 98, or NT operating system; 16 MB available RAM; monitor capable of displaying sixteen-bit colour at a resolution of 800 × 600 pixels; CD-ROM drive.

Basic operating features: twelve interactive tutorials; tutorial features (glossary, references, notepad, find, history, interactive text and areas, pop-up boxes); image collection and display options (thumbnail and full-screen viewing); search features (keyword, text, history).

Topics in International Health, Nutrition is an educational presentation produced by CABI Publishing. It is a prescribed CD-ROM software program that reviews international nutrition issues through twelve tutorials:

- (1) overview;
- (2) epidemiology and aetiology of malnutrition;
- (3) malnutrition and infection;
- (4) maternal and child health;
- (5) prevention and malnutrition;
- (6) assessment of nutritional status;
- (7) treatment of severe malnutrition in children;
- (8) emergency situations;
- (9) vitamin A deficiency;
- (10) Fe-deficiency anaemia;
- (11) I-deficiency disorders;
- (12) diet and chronic diseases.

The data presented are accurate and broad, providing long-term usability. Each tutorial has a table of contents and follows a logical sequence. The information is presented clearly and in a manner that is easy to understand. The CD-ROM is well done technically, in that it includes many interesting pictures, graphics and illustrations, and uses different colours, fonts and other features to highlight or reinforce key points.

The program emphasizes topics related to malnutrition and international health. Although probably unintentional, this approach puts food overabundance in an uncomfortable juxtaposition to food insecurity. Persons from the developed world may be surprised by the relatively minor context that the chronic diseases are given in this program, the worldwide prevalence of malnutrition and its related problems and consequences.

All tutorials contain an introduction and the objectives. Each tutorial then contains several pertinent sections generally related to epidemiology, causes and effects, prevention and control, treatment strategies, or education. There is an assessment section after each key concept in the tutorial and a concluding tutorial assessment and summary. This is an excellent feature that provides for constant review and reinforcement of the material.

For example, the tutorial on vitamin A contains an

introduction, objectives, aetiology and epidemiology, xerophthalmia, increased child mortality, vitamin A and HIV–AIDS prevention and control, five assessments, the tutorial assessment and a summary. The program also includes a tutorial on emergency situations. It discusses common emergency situations, their causes and effects, the assessment and measurement of the situation, treatment and feeding programmes, and other aspects related to emergencies. This is an important topic that is often ignored when discussing international nutrition, and the tutorial illustrates the complexity of emergency situations and gives a sense that a well-designed comprehensible assessment and intervention plan may have a positive outcome.

The program is probably most appropriate for college students and health professionals, but it can be used by a variety of audiences, such as the general public and high school students. Viewing the entire CD-ROM will take a large amount of time. However, each of the twelve sections can be viewed at separate times as they are independent of each other. Given its tutorial component, the CD-ROM is best used individually. However, each tutorial can also be used in a class or group setting to promote discussions on international health, food insecurity, food and politics and related topics. *Topics in International Health, Nutrition* provides many use options.

Some limitations include the repeated use of a few pictures, mostly from Africa and Asia. Although these areas have the preponderance of malnutrition, more pictures displaying health problems in other parts of the world would have better emphasized the broad base of international health issues. A greater number of pictures from the developed world, particularly in the section on chronic diseases, would have been desirable.

These still pictures would have provided even more impact if they were short videos. The program does not include sound. A narrated program would enhance its usability, especially in a group- or class-based setting.

The tutorials may include abbreviations or acronyms within the narrative. Most are identified, but not all. These abbreviations or acronyms may be common to persons from some specific English-language areas or to persons highly knowledgeable in nutrition, but not by novices. For example, VAD is used to describe vitamin A deficiency. VAD is not listed in the glossary as such, so a user would have to know to search for, or 'click' onto 'micronutrient deficiencies' to find the definition of VAD. Similarly, a user that is not familiar with the rehydration solutions, F-75 and F-100, will not find them listed in the glossary and will have to search through the tutorial to get further information on the solutions.

Topics in International Health, Nutrition is highly recommended for individual or group-based instruction of university students and health professionals interested in the broad impact of malnutrition.

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