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October 19, 2003

Patricia Daniels, Director
Supplemental Food Programs Division
Food and Nutrition Service, USDA
3101 Park Center Drive
Room 520
Alexandria, VA 22302

RE: "Revisions to the WIC Food Packages"

Dear Ms. Daniels,

I am providing comment regarding the opportunity for revisions to the WIC Food Packages. I sincerely endorse the NWA recommendations the RD's of WIC forwarded in their position statement, but I wish to tell you that some of these changes are necessary based on my latest (in press) research.

I recently completed my doctoral dissertation looking at how women with gestational diabetes cope with their diagnosis and what it was like living with this condition. As an interesting finding, the women who received WIC had some additional issues to face. Because their condition is one of carbohydrate intolerance, they are in need of gaining energy and nutrition from higher protein, fiber, and lean fat products. Their need to more evenly distribute and limit their carbohydrate intake over the course of each day was not perceived as supported by the large juice/cereal/milk quotas currently provided. Most of the women are limited to 4 ounces of juice per day—if any at all, given its large sugar content. They would be better served with fruit replacements. To have cereal and milk together is often too much carbohydrate load for these women. They need increased allowances for eggs, cheeses, whole grain breads, and even milk substitutes (such as yogurt, soy or rice milks). These needs coincide with the requests in the NWA position paper.

Finally, some packages offer tuna. Many of these pregnant women have been told by their providers that tuna, or any other large ocean fish, now has dangerously high levels of mercury and it is unhealthy for pregnant women to eat more than one serving per week.

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In conclusion, these 30-year-old food packages need to now accommodate the changes in science and society. Not only do we need to be sensitive to cultural/ethnic variations in food selections, but please consider medical conditions. Gestational diabetes is one such condition that is NOT served by the current food packages and needs consideration. If you have further questions regarding the findings of my research, please contact me and I would be happy to provide it or to present it to any group. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Lois C. Hamel, APRN-C

Lois C. Hamel, Ph.D., APRN, BC
Assistant Professor