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METRIC SYSTEM CONVERSION FOR HOSPITAL DIETARY DEPARTMENTS

by

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INTRODUCTION

The metric system is rapidly becoming the standard system of measures for the whole world, with 90% of the countries already adopting the system. England, from whom the United States inherited its system of weights and measures, is more than halfway through its ten-year conversion program (1).

The United States is moving toward the adoption of the metric system as the standard, and the switch is inevitable. Although no actual date has been set for conversion, the Senate has approved legislation for the changeover in a ten-year transition period (2). The legislation evolved from the recommendation by former Secretary of Commerce Maurice Stans that was based on a comprehensive three year feasibility study by the National Bureau of Standards completed on July, 1971, with a report entitled "A Metric America- A Decision Whose Time Has Come." The study recommended that the United States change to the international metric system through a systematic nationally coordinated ten-year conversion program with individual segments of society working out their own specific timetable and program (3).

Hospital dietary departments should start to consider the problems of conversion and make appropriate plans to accomplish the changeover with minimum cost and confusion. The longer the decision is delayed, the more the eventual cost of the change will be.

In a statement submitted by the American Dietetic Association as testimony for the United States Metric Study Interim Report, the existence of a confused mixture of customary and metric units was reported, although changes are being made in certain areas. The

adoption of the metric system with a definite plan for a ten-year conversion period was favored by the American Dietetic Association (4).

The objective of this report was to provide background information for the changeover to the metric system by hospital dietary departments, and the development of training aids for food service employees.