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Researching Better Ways For You

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Researchers are at work constantly to make life healthier, easier and happier for American homemakers. The Homemaker presents a roundup of research news at Iowa State.

**Researching Better Ways For You**

by Joanne Will

Technical Journalism Junior

Research is the "life blood" of home economics, bringing more free time to homemakers, better nutrition to children and a deeper knowledge of human relationships to all.

Researchers face crossroads every day at Iowa State under a program directed by Dr. Pearl Swanson. Experiments are carried on under the auspices of the Iowa Agricultural and Home Economics Experiment Station of the Division of Agriculture. At present, the research program is divided into six general areas—growth and development of family members, interpersonal relations within the family, maintenance of home life, education of family members for homemaking, management of resources and guidance into profession basic to family living.

Growth and Development of Family Members

Food cannot serve its function unless it is liked and accepted by the people eating it. A large portion of the research in this area is directed to the study of the quality of food and the factors affecting its quality. Quality is often estimated by the reactions of taste panels. Studies of the factors which influence the judgment of taste panels are underway so that better palatability tests may be developed. For example, color often affects taste, so the panel tests food in a room illuminated with a ruby-red lamp to disguise the color of the samples.

Foods researchers are studying what effect marketing and processing techniques have on quality. They gather data on the effect of production practices, technology, home preparation and home preservation of many foods. Eggs, for example, are subjected today to many processes such as drying and cold storage. Just how do these techniques affect the functional properties of eggs—their foaming power, their emulsifying power?

Other important research in this area concerns the nutrition of people—the way the body utilizes food and how the food eaten meets personal nutritional requirements. The question is how well nourished are Iowans? Records of food intakes of Iowa children and of older women have been secured. Researchers have studied the diets of about 2000 school children and 1100 women over 30 years old to determine whether Iowa diets are nutritionally adequate. This study will also show how the dietary habits of Iowa women change over the years.

Although acute nutritional diseases have disappeared from our country, borderline nutrition cases may exist. A deficiency in any food nutrient reduces health and efficiency. Studies have shown that the diets of Iowa school children are inadequate in milk and green vegetables. The chief deficiency in the diets of Iowa women is milk—32 per cent were drinking no milk at all, with the average intake of milk being only one half cup per day. Researchers are trying to analyze the characteristics and effects of borderline nutrition deficiency and will use the results of the study in educational programs.

Interrelation Within The Family

The personality development of children is one problem in which child development researchers are interested. One project is designed to determine what relationship may exist between the total growth of the child and the continuity of his mothering experience. Three groups of infants, differentiated by the type of mothering experienced during the first year of life constitute the experimental sample. One group is made up of home management house babies, the second group includes infants in foster homes and the third group consists of infants with "normal" mothering in the homes of their natural parents. Psychological, social, emotional and physical development data are collected to determine the effect of "multiple mothering."

Maintenance of Home Life

Ways of improving the work and activities that go on in the home—cooking, cleaning, laundering, preserving food—are in constant focus.

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Equipment (Continued from page 10)

trip began with a tour of Merchandise Mart areas which are of interest to women. The Mart was alive with activity in preparation for the big January showing. Miss Olga Plishonig, an Iowa State graduate and Home Economics Director at Philco, showed us around the half acre showroom of Philco appliances. She stressed the importance of interpreting the woman’s point of view to the salesmen of the products for the home.

Next we visited Harvey and Howe Publishers, who publish the magazine, “What’s New in Home Economics.” Miss Eleanor Howe, Editor-in-Chief, and Mrs. Amber C. Ludwig, Equipment Editor, spoke on the steps of magazine publication from the initial gathering of material to the final phase of distribution.

Underwriter’s Laboratories

Underwriter’s Laboratories was our last stop. Underwriter’s is a nonprofit organization concerned only with user safety of all kinds of equipment. Testing of products is done in Northbrook, Illinois; New York City, New York; and Santa Clara, California, as well as in the Chicago laboratory.

At the Laboratories we saw them test iron cords. These cords must be able to stand a certain number of twists without breaking or cracking in order to gain the UL seal of approval. Researchers set fireproof doors afame to see if they really are fireproof and then use fire extinguishers to put out the fires, determining whether the fire extinguishers are efficient. One man jumped and rolled and fell on an electric blanket to see if it would stand up under such treatment. All types of equipment and products are tested in ways like this. The manufacturer pays for the investigation of his product and may or may not receive the coveted UL seal of approval depending upon the performance of his product.

Our group of 21 students scattered at the end of the tour to all sections of the United States, Canada and Mexico for vacation but each of us took home a new insight into the field of the professional home economist in the field of household equipment.

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In studying improvements for home laundering, such factors as the relationships of the amount of soap used, the hardness of water and the temperature of the water to the removal of soil are recorded. A new method of testing the removal of soil was developed here at Iowa State. Swatches of fabric used for testing laundering effectiveness were treated with radioactive material. By measuring the radioactivity with a Geiger counter before and after laundering, the amount of soil actually removed was studied. Previous studies only showed the amount of soil that appeared to be removed.

The household equipment department is in charge of a project studying the electronic range to gain more knowledge on its use as an aid to homemakers who may buy the range in the future.

Cooking in aluminum is a relatively recent development, and the food and nutrition department has studied how best to use foil in cooking meats and fowl.

Education of Family Members for Homemaking

In the home economics education field, researchers seek to improve overall educational programs and methods of teaching. They also work in developing ways of reaching more people.

Studies on a statewide basis to determine the educational needs of low socio-economic rural homemakers are now in process. Research shows that this group has special educational requirements and home economics programs for them need careful planning.

In cooperation with the State Board for Vocational Education, the home economics department is developing tests, inventories and scoring devices which a teacher can use to measure the effectiveness of her home economics program.

Guidance Into Profession Basic To Family Living

Many women come to college not knowing to which field in home economics they are best suited. Studies at Iowa State have developed tests to measure the vocational interests of women in the field of home economics. These tests are taken by Iowa State freshmen. Results are used by advisors to help guide the coeds into the right profession. Perhaps some of you have already taken this test. At present, a study is being made concerning the relationship of the vocation women choose after college to the results of the tests taken in the freshman and senior years. That is, the predictive value of these tests is being determined.

Management of Resources

The wise use of family resources is very important. Problems on ways to conserve human energy, use of time and management of money call for research in home management and family economics. What are the family problems today’s homemaker is likely to face? How can she handle these problems so that both she and her family will have a sense of satisfaction and security? Research in this area aims to answer these questions.