

## Qualitative Assessment of the Menu Components of the School Prof. EMEIEF José Aldo Kuhl, Limeira (SP).

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### Abstract

The school environment is very important in shaping healthy eating habits. This study aimed to analyze the menu offered to the students of a public school by the method Qualitative Evaluation of Menu Components (QEMC). There were high frequency of fruits and vegetables; low frequency of sweets, fatty meats, sausages and fried preparations; and absence of monotony colors. In contrast, there was a high frequency of sulfur-rich foods. The daily nutritional quality of the menu was balanced with the presence of the major food groups of the Brazilian food pyramid guide.

*Key words: children, qualitative assessment, menu.*

### Introduction

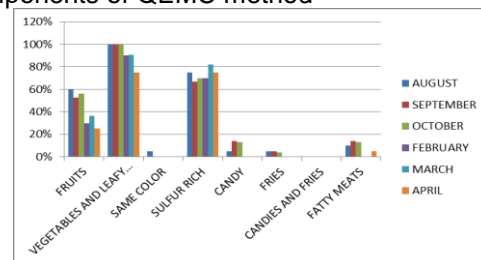
Healthy eating habits since from the childhood provide adequate growth, development, and health. The school environment is essential to the development of these habits as the children remain at school for one or two periods of the day, living together with educators and other children, that will influence the formation of their values and their lifestyle, including the feeding habits.

The objective was to assess qualitatively the nutritional adequacy of the menu offered to the students aged from 6 to 11 years old of a school.

### Results and Discussion

The QEMC method analyse globally the menu based on eight quality criteria: 1) presence of fruits; 2) vegetables and leafy vegetables; 3) sulfur-rich foods; 4) sweets; 5) fried foods; 6) simultaneous sweets and fried foods; 7) fatty meats; and 8) color monotony. We analyzed the menu offered during six non-consecutive months, totaling 116 days. In general, the qualitative analysis of the menus were satisfactory (Figure1). The presence of vegetables and leafy vegetables was the criteria that showed the highest frequency. The frequency of fruit was greater during the first three months of evaluation. There were low occurrence of sweets, fried foods, and sweets associated with fried foods and fatty meats, indicating low consumption of sugar and fat. However, the frequencies of sulfur-rich foods were high, which requires greater attention to the preparation technique applied, avoiding gastrointestinal problems. Finally, no monotony in colors was observed, which makes it more attractive and stimulates the desire of children to enjoy the meal.

**Figure 1.** Distribution of monthly frequency of the components of QEMC method



In a previous study<sup>1</sup> conducted in a center of early childhood education, the occurrence of fruits and vegetables were low. From a total of 25 days of analysis there was only one day that offered fruit. The frequency of sweets and the presence of trans fatty acid in preparations were elevated, with 92 and 100%, respectively<sup>2</sup>.

### Conclusions

The nutritional quality of meals offered by the institution is balanced. It had, every day, at least one portion of the main food groups of the food pyramid. The attention to the nutritional quality of school menus may contribute to the consolidation of healthy eating habits throughout the life, and to prevent obesity and cardiovascular diseases in the future.

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<sup>1</sup>MENEGAZZO, M.; FRACALLOSSI, K.; FERNANDES, A. C.; MEDEIROS, N. I. Avaliação qualitativa das preparações do cardápio de centros de educação infantil. *Rev. Nutr.* [online]. 2011, vol.24, n.2, pp. 243-251. ISSN 1415-5273.

<sup>2</sup>VEIROS, A. B.; PROENÇA, R. P. C.; Avaliação Qualitativa das Preparações do Cardápio em uma Unidade de Alimentação e Nutrição – Método AQPC. *Rev. Nutr.* [online]. 2003.