

Consumers' and Homemaking Magazines Provided Best Nutrition Coverage in 1995/96

By ACSH Staff — February 1, 1998

New York, NY February, 1998 The American Council on Science and Health (ACSH) has reported that, as a group, consumer-oriented magazines outrank other types of magazines in the quality of their nutrition reporting, with homemaking publications rated a close second. These findings were part of ACSH's seventh survey of nutrition reporting in popular magazines, in which 15 of 21 magazines surveyed were rated as either "Excellent" or "Good" sources of nutrition information.

Four ACSH judges, experts in nutrition and/or food science, rated eight randomly selected articles from each of the 21 magazines surveyed to see whether (1) the articles provided factual information; (2) they presented information objectively; and (3) they made sound nutritional recommendations.

* Three magazines *Consumer Reports*, *Better Homes & Gardens*, and *Good Housekeeping* topped the list with ratings of 90 percent or more, for a rating of "Excellent."

* Twelve publications *Glamour*, *Parents*, *Health*, *Reader's Digest*, *Prevention*, *Woman's Day*, *Cooking Light*, *McCall's*, *Redbook*, *Runner's World*, *Shape*, and *Men's Health* were ranked between 80 and 89 percent, placing them in the "Good" category.

* Five titles *Fitness*, *Mademoiselle*, *Self*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Muscle & Fitness* were ranked between 70 and 79 percent, earning each a rating of "Fair." All five showed plenty of room for improvement.

* Only one magazine, *New Woman*, with a score of 69 percent, was marked "Poor."

As a group, the consumer-focused publications (*Consumer Reports*, *Parents*, and *Reader's Digest*) earned the highest combined rating (90 percent). They were followed closely by the group of homemaking-oriented magazines (*Better Homes & Gardens*, *Cooking Light*, and *Good Housekeeping*) at 89 percent. Surprisingly, the health-and-fitness magazines did not fare as well, receiving a group score of 81 percent. The women's magazines received a collective score of 80 percent.

In speaking of the titles in the "Excellent" and "Good" categories, Dr. Manfred Kroger a judge in all seven ACSH surveys said that these magazines ". . . are no longer looking at diet and foods frivolously."

Of the 18 magazines in the current survey that were also included in the last one, 14 either maintained their earlier ranking or improved it. But fair warning: There were still examples especially in the magazines that fell into the "Fair" and "Poor" categories of articles promoting quick-fix, sure-fire treatments for everything from obesity to mood swings. As Dr. Ruth Kava,

ACSH's director of nutrition, notes: "Consumers should be aware that although magazine nutrition coverage has improved overall, there are still some pockets of poor reporting out there."

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