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2012

# If a picture tells a thousand words, how useful are they as a teaching tool? Evaluating a digital food photo resource within a first year tertiary nutrition subject

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## Publication Details

Baker, J., Fish, J., Walton, K. L., McMahan, A., Brewer, C. J., Manning, F., Grafenauer, S., Kennedy, M. A. & Probst, Y. (2012). If a picture tells a thousand words, how useful are they as a teaching tool? Evaluating a digital food photo resource within a first year tertiary nutrition subject. *Nutrition and Dietetics*, 69 (Suppl. S1), 158-158.

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## **Abstract**

Abstract of poster presented at Dietitians Association of Australia 16th International Congress of Dietetics, 5-8 September 2012, Sydney Convention & Exhibition Centre, Sydney, Australia.

## **Disciplines**

Arts and Humanities | Life Sciences | Medicine and Health Sciences | Social and Behavioral Sciences

## **Publication Details**

Baker, J., Fish, J., Walton, K. L., McMahon, A., Brewer, C. J., Manning, F., Grafenauer, S., Kennedy, M. A. & Probst, Y. (2012). If a picture tells a thousand words, how useful are they as a teaching tool? Evaluating a digital food photo resource within a first year tertiary nutrition subject. *Nutrition and Dietetics*, 69 (Suppl. S1), 158-158.

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## **If a picture tells a thousand words, how useful are they as a teaching tool? Evaluating a digital food photo resource within a first year tertiary nutrition subject**

A sound knowledge of food composition is fundamental to the study of nutrition and is often a challenging concept to convey and comprehend. The primary aim of this study was to assess the perceptions and experiences of students studying an introductory nutrition subject, regarding the efficacy and usefulness of a digital food photo resource in building their understanding of food composition and product knowledge. The secondary aim was to identify and explore other potential applications of the resource within other formats and settings. Tertiary students (n=203) studying the nutrition subject, SHS150 at the University of Wollongong (UOW) were introduced to a newly developed resource, containing 200 digital food photographs, with nutrient profile information, in week five of semester two via lectures, activities and an assessment. Students were invited to take part in an optional, anonymous online survey via Survey Monkey (n= 27) in week eight and an intensive interview (n=2) in week 10. Intensive interview questions were piloted in week nine via a semi-structured student interview (n=1) and all interviews were conducted, transcribed and de-identified by independent researchers to minimise potential bias, and reviewed using content and thematic analysis. The digital resource was received positively with 67% of students surveyed agreeing they found it less challenging to estimate the nutrient composition of food since using the digital resource. Most (83%) suggested they would likely access the digital resource again. Students found the resource enhanced their understanding of food composition reinforcing the significant need for the digital resource and future expansion.

Funding source: This project was been funded by a University of Wollongong Faculty Service Agreement.