

New 2017 Competencies for Dysphagia Assessment and Management

In the interest of public safety and the provision of safe, competent services, the College undertook research to identify areas for potential risks of harm to clients in dietetic practice. Results revealed that Dysphagia management was one of the highest risk activities identified by RDs in their practice. Addressing areas of high risk in dietetic practice is important to help the College fulfill its public protection mandate.

The Alliance of Canadian Dietetic Regulatory Bodies established the *2017 Competencies for Dysphagia Assessment and Management* required for safe, ethical, and effective practice in dysphagia-related care. The process to establish the new *Competencies* included conducting an environmental scan of existing dysphagia competencies and clinical practice standards, consulting RDs, other health professionals, and Dietitians of Canada representatives. The competencies were validated via a national survey.

NEW 2017 DYSPHAGIA COMPETENCIES ENDORSED

In March 2017, the College Council endorsed the new Dysphagia Competencies, which define the expectations for safe, ethical, and effective dysphagia management. The dysphagia competency statements do not stand alone and are not a protocol. Building on the *Integrated Competencies for Dietetic Education and Practice*,¹ they set out additional performance indicators for dysphagia assessment and management. They identify the specific knowledge and skills required for screening, conducting a clinical (bedside) swallowing assessment, and for participating in an instrumental swallowing assessment. Performance indicators are not repeated in each section, as each section builds on the previous.

¹ The primary purpose of the ICDEP is to express the minimum competencies expected for safe, effective and ethical entry-level dietetic practice.

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RDS ARE ACCOUNTABLE TO PRACTICE DYSPHAGIA MANAGEMENT SAFELY

RDs wishing to perform any task or function related to dysphagia have a duty to assess and evaluate whether they have the personal expertise or competence to do so safely and effectively, both from the professional and public protection points of view. They must have the appropriate education, practical training and mentorship to provide safe, competent dysphagia management. The Dysphagia Competencies apply to RDs who are gaining experience in this practice area as well as those with expertise.

RDs are accountable to practice dysphagia assessment and management according to their provincial regulatory standards and college policies. If you have any questions or concerns about dysphagia management, please call the College's Practice Advisory Service (see page 8 for details).

The College 2016 *Dysphagia Policy* will be updated to incorporate the *2017 Competencies for Dysphagia Assessment and Management*.

The College thanks RDs who completed the national survey and who provided feedback on the drafts to ensure a clear, comprehensive, and valid outline of the knowledge, skills and judgement required for dysphagia assessment and management in dietetic practice in Canada.