



What the College does to Maintain Trust in the RD Title

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One of the College's functions is to protect the professional title of "dietitian". Since March 2013, the College has responded to 17 reports about the inappropriate use of the RD title. This work is important to ensure that the public, when choosing a nutrition professional, can trust that anyone using this protected title "RD" is qualified to help them.

PUBLIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE RD TITLE

The College has undertaken a public information program about how we set and enforce standards for dietitians to ensure that they can offer safe, competent and ethical services to people in Ontario. We tell the public that they can tell that a dietitian has achieved the high standards for practicing in Ontario because they have "Registered Dietitian" or "RD" after their name. This education is aimed at highlighting the link between the RD title with competence, ethics and quality.

RESPONDING TO REPORTS FROM RDS AND THE PUBLIC

The College relies heavily on reports from RDs and the public about suspected unauthorized use of the titles of

"dietitian", "Registered Dietitian", and RD. When a report is received from the public or a member of the College, an initial investigation is done by College staff.

In most cases, the College uses an educational approach by contacting the person misusing the title and their employer to advise them about the law, the protected title of "dietitian" in Ontario and the potential penalty for misuse of the title. We follow-up to ensure that corrective action is taken. This approach is normally successful. When a stronger approach is necessary, legal counsel is involved. Although, this College has never been required to take anyone to court for repeated unauthorized use of the protected title, other Ontario health regulatory colleges have done so.

EXAMPLES OF THE TITLE PROTECTION CASES ADDRESSED BY THE COLLEGE

Nutrition graduate blog

A member contacted the College about comments on a nutrition-related blog. One of the blog contributors is the graduate of an accredited undergraduate nutrition program who had never completed an internship. When asked about his credentials, the blogger suggested that he had completed all of the qualifications for being a dietitian, but could not call himself an RD because he had not "paid the Ontario College their money".

The College advised the blogger that, although he had been careful not to refer to himself as a 'dietitian', these comments still have the effect of representing that he is qualified to practise as a dietitian in Ontario, and could be considered a breach of the *Dietetics Act*.

We wish to thank the Registered Dietitians who have reported to the College the individuals and organizations who were misusing the RD title. Yours was an important contribution to protecting the integrity of the professional RD Title.

Holding yourself out as being qualified to practice as a dietitian is a breach section 7(2) of the Dietetics Act:

7(2) No person other than a member shall hold himself or herself out as a person who is qualified to practise in Ontario as a dietitian or in a specialty of dietetics.

Breach of this provision is an offence and can be enforced by the College through the courts:

9. Every person who contravenes subsection 7(1) or (2) is guilty of an offence and on conviction is liable to a fine of not more than \$25,000 for a first offence, and not more than \$50,000 for a second or subsequent offence.

Nutritionist at a gym

The College received a report about a trainer at a gym whose website profile indicated that she had received “registered dietitian designation from the University of Guelph”. This person was not a member of the College.

After being advised by the College about the law in Ontario and the potential penalties for holding oneself out to be a member of the College, she corrected the information on the website and provided assurances that she would be more careful in the way she represents her qualifications.

Registered Holistic Nutritionist

The College was contacted by a dietitian about a nutritionist whose online bio stated: “...she went on to study a license to council through the College of Dietitians of Ontario. She received her designation and remains in good standing as an academic affiliate through the Dietitians of Ontario.”

The College felt that the approach typically used to educate persons who misuse the RD title was not appropriate for this case, given the extreme misrepresentation and the potential impact on the College’s public information efforts. The suggestion that this person had received education from the College and continued to have an “academic affiliation” actually undermined the entire foundation of the College’s public information campaign. The campaign makes clear that the

College is a regulatory body with a mandate to protect the public; it is not an educational institution.

For this case, letters were drafted by legal counsel and served by process server to both the nutritionist and her employer. In addition the College took the unusual step of placing an advertisement in the local newspaper advising that this person has no affiliation with the College, that she is not a dietitian, and clarifying the College’s role as regulatory body, not educational institution. This advertisement caught the attention of a local reporter, who interviewed both the College and the Nutritionist and followed with an article.

Advertising Website for Health Professionals

In the Winter 2013 *résumé*, the College reported about a website that helped connect consumers with a variety of health professionals. The website allowed visitors to narrow their search by specifying the health profession and the region, which included the US, Canada, and Europe.

In October 2012, the College contacted all of the nutritionists advertising in Ontario and required them to contact the website administrators and have their advertisements changed. Although the nutritionists may not have requested for their listings to appear under the heading of “Dietitian”, the College considers it the individual’s responsibility to ensure that their listing is appropriate.

The College also contacted the administrators of the website to encourage them to change the search functions so that “Nutritionists” and “Dietitians” would be advertised separately. The College also alerted the *Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics* in the US as well as all other Canadian provincial dietetic regulatory bodies about this website.

When College staff attempted to access the site in early 2013, the website was unavailable for several months. The College continued to monitor the site and found that it had been reactivated in 2014.

The College has again contacted the website administrators, as well as all nutritionists on this website to have their advertisements corrected.

How can you help the College Protect your professional RD Title?

USE YOUR RD TITLE

The Registration Regulation makes it mandatory for members to use the titles of Registered Dietitian or RD when referring to their dietetic practice. Seeing the RD title will help members of the public to recognize Dietitians as the only regulated nutrition profession in Ontario.

CONTACT THE COLLEGE

As a regulatory body, the College is responsible to ensure that only members of the College of Dietitians of Ontario use the dietitian title. It would be very difficult to do this work without your help. Please continue to let us know when you think a person in your neighbourhood may be using your professional title inappropriately.

EXERCISE YOUR RIGHTS AS A CONSUMER

The publishers of directories have reacted more quickly to complaints received from their customers, as opposed to the College. If you make a report to the College about a non-RD appearing under the heading of "Dietitian" in a directory, the College will take appropriate action. If you have a listing in a directory that includes nutritionists under the dietitian heading, you are urged to contact your sales representative to express concern that they are permitting the unauthorized use of your professional title. The College can provide you with a template letter if you need one.

