

# Three Myths about Practicing Dietetics Fewer Than 500 Hours over Three Years



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In exercising its mandate of public protection, the College's interest is that RDs who are not competent to practice dietetics do not practice dietetics.

*The College of Dietitians of Ontario exists to regulate and support all Registered Dietitians in the interest of the public of Ontario.*

*We are dedicated to the ongoing enhancement of safe, ethical and competent nutrition services provided by Registered Dietitians in their changing practice environments*

After several conversations with members about the College's new policies for RDs who practise dietetics fewer than 500 hrs over three years, I am concerned that some may be making major professional decisions based on a misunderstanding of those policies. Below are the three principal myths that have troubled members.

## MYTH ONE – PRACTICING DIETETICS MEANS PRACTICING IN A CLINICAL AREA

The definition of practicing dietetics was developed in consultation with RDs. It is very broad and recognizes all areas of dietetic practice including: education; research; marketing and sales related to nutrition products and services; administration and development of food systems; policy/program and systems development related to food and nutrition and health; capacity building through information, skills development and food security projects; and supporting the profession through quality improvement, knowledge dissemination, policy and capacity building.

The essence of the definition is "Paid or unpaid activities for which members use food & nutrition-specific knowledge, skills and judgment..." If an RD is using the body of knowledge and competencies underpinning the profession, then they are practicing dietetics.

To review the full definition of practicing dietetics, refer to figure 4.1 on page 38 of the *Jurisprudence Handbook for Dietitians in Ontario*. I would encourage RDs to read the entire definition document and contact the College should there be questions.

## MYTH TWO – LEADERSHIP ROLES ARE NOT RECOGNIZED AS PRACTICING DIETETICS

The definition of practicing dietetics recognizes leadership roles that are in some way related to dietetics and health care – the condition being that the role uses "food & nutrition-specific knowledge, skills and judgment..." Due to the variety of roles that relate to nutrition-specific knowledge, skills and judgment, it is difficult for the College to create a comprehensive list of the type of roles that are included or not. The definition provides a few examples to guide RDs. College staff can help RDs examine specific roles and situations on a one-to-one basis.

## MYTH THREE – MY CERTIFICATE WILL NOT BE RENEWED IF I DO NOT PRACTICE 500 HRS OVER 3 YEARS

Hours of practice are a trigger for an assessment not an automatic revocation. An RD who has practised dietetics fewer than 500 hrs over 3 years is referred to the Quality Assurance Committee for an assessment. The Committee considers the extent and nature of practice hours as well as all professional education and personal development activities to assess whether the RD has maintained competence to practice. It is the combination of



practice and professional development that will show the extent to which the RD has maintained connection to or refreshed the knowledge and application of knowledge related to dietetics. The *Integrated Competencies for Dietetic Practice and Education* is an important tool for the assessment. Certainly, it is not expected that RDs maintain all the foundational knowledge and competencies across all areas of practice. When assessed, RDs can choose either their most recent area of practice or one where they intend to practice in the future.

There are options available for RDs who do not intend to practise dietetics but who want to be recognized by their Registered Dietitian title and maintain their certificate of

registration. These options include undertaking professional development to maintain their knowledge and competence or entering into a voluntary undertaking with the College not to practice dietetics. In exercising its mandate of public protection, the College's interest is that RDs who are not competent to practice dietetics do not practice dietetics.

### YOUR COMMENTS ARE WELCOMED

The College would appreciate hearing from RDs if they have suggestions about the definition of practicing dietetics and what should be included or clarified. This definition is also used to determine which RDs are required to have liability insurance for their dietetic practice.

## Farewell and Thank You

We offer a heartfelt thank you to these outgoing members for their commitment and hard work that have contributed to the success of the College. We wish them well in their future endeavours.

### EDITH BROWN, APPOINTED PUBLIC COUNCILLOR

During her six years as a Public Councillor (June 2007 to June 2013) Edith Brown has kept the public interest at the forefront of deliberations and decisions by Council and on committees as Chair of the Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee and as a member of the Elections, Discipline and Fitness to Practice, the Registration, Legislative Issues and Patient Relations Committees.

### DEION WEIR, RD, ELECTED COUNCILLOR, DISTRICT 3

As a member of Council from 2010-2013, Deion brought her energy and discernment to Council discussions. She contributed the same good judgment to committee work as the Chair of the Discipline Committee and as a member of the Quality Assurance and the Patient Relations Committee.

### COMMITTEE APPOINTEES

#### Claire Cronier, RD

For the past two years as a committee appointee, Claire Cronier has worked on the Legislative Issues Committee where she made a significant contribution to the

development of criteria to determine when it would be appropriate for the College to participate in the stakeholder consultations requested by the *Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council*.

#### Laurel Hoard, RD

Since 2006, Laurel Hoard has dedicated many hours of service to the College. She was President of the College in 2009/2010. As a Councillor, she served on the Executive, Quality Assurance, Complaints/Inquiries, Complaints and Reports, and Registration Committees. For the past 2 years, she has served on the Registration Committee as a committee appointee. We offer special thanks for her vision and the clear-sighted approach that Laurel has brought to her work at the College.

### A Warm Welcome to a New Public Councillor, Alan Warren



Mr. Warren is a retired teacher who taught special education in elementary and secondary schools and English as a Second Language in an Adult Education Program in Toronto. Prior to his teaching career, Alan was an Urban Planner who worked primarily on social and economic planning issues. Alan has a keen interest in nutrition and healthy, active living.