

# New Objectives for Patient Relations



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President

The *Regulated Health Professions Act* requires that health regulatory colleges in Ontario have a Patient Relations Program, and that the Patient Relations Committees advise the College Council with regard to the Patient Relations Program.

Transparency and accountability are essential components of the Patient Relations Program. According to law, the Patient Relations Committee must report annually to the Minister of Health and Long Term Care on program accomplishments and to the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council (HPRAC) whenever changes are made to this program.

The *Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council (HPRAC)* has articulated new objectives and program elements for the Patient Relations Program. In addition to having measures to prevent and deal with sexual abuse of clients by members, the Patient Relations Committee's new objectives are to:

- help the health professionals regulated by the College enhance relations with their patients or clients, and by extension, the public;
- help the public understand of the range and quality of the professional services offered by members of the College;
- help inform patients or clients of their rights in dealing with members of the profession and the College, including that they will be treated in an ethical, competent, sensitive and respectful manner;
- help the public have a greater knowledge of the role of the regulatory College and how to participate in College processes and/or programs.

The College had already been working toward these objectives with its products and programs. It has worked hard to inform members about patient relations issues such as how physical and mental health issues impact on the quality of client care (*résumé* Fall & Winter 2006) and how professional boundary issues affect relations between RDs and their clients (*résumé* Fall 2004 and Winter 2005). The College will continue to support RDs by giving relevant information through tools like *résumé*, workshops and online education, that will assist them in being aware and respectful of the rights of patients and clients, and to know their obligations as professionals.

Other general information is available to the public on the College website including:

- how to contact the College;
- the Register of Dietitians which helps members of the public verify that their nutrition counsellor is an RD;
- processes for making the inquiries, complaints and report;
- College regulations, by-laws, rules, guidelines and policies.

This year, in response to HPRAC requirements, the Patient Relations Committee has been very active in establishing strategic goals, terms of reference and directions for the Patient Relations. Evaluation will be a key component of our Patient Relations Program to ensure that we meet program accountability requirements and accomplish our public and member education plans. Another focus of the Committee will be to foster a culture of awareness and respect for the professional/patient relationship throughout the organization.