



Practice Question of the Month

May 2009

Boundary Crossings

Welcome! The College's Practice Advisory Service receives many interesting questions from dietitians. In attempt to enhance communication and education of our members, we will initiate a *Practice Question of the Month* five-minute module series.

May 2009, the first module in this series will address boundary crossings.

Please take the time at the end of the module to fill out a short survey. We appreciate your input and value your feedback.

Now let's begin...



An RD has been invited by a client to be their “friend” on a social networking website. Would it be appropriate for the RD to accept the client's request?

- ☐ A) Sure, everyone’s doing it!
- ☒ B) No, accepting the client as a “friend” on any social networking website would be considered a boundary crossing.
- ☐ C) Yes, accept the client’s “friend” invitation, but the RD should restrict what the client can view within their profile.

Submit

Clear



B) Is the correct answer to this practice question.

- Considered a *Boundary Crossing-Dual Relationship*.
- Interferes with the client-RD professional relationship.
- “Friends” are privy to messages, photos, and other personal information.

Continued...

According to chapter 10 of CDO’s Jurisprudence Handbook for Dietitians in Ontario, accepting a client as a “friend” on any social networking website would be considered a Boundary Crossing. Specifically, this would fall under the category of Dual Relationships, as this proposed friendship has the potential to interfere with the client-RD professional relationship.

Social networking websites such as Facebook or MySpace, contain a great deal of personal information relating to a one’s social life. A client who is an RD’s “friend” on one of these websites would be privy to messages, photos, and other information that may compromise the dynamics of the professional relationship.



B) Is the correct answer to this practice question.

- The College suggests that RDs avoid dual relationships wherever possible.
- Do not accept or disregard clients' "friend" requests.
- Explain to clients why you did not accept the invitation.

The College suggests that RDs avoid dual relationships wherever possible. This can be easily done on most social networking websites by not accepting or simply disregarding the client's "friend" request.

In the interest of maintaining a good professional relationship and open communication, RDs may wish to explain to clients why they did not accept the "friend" invitation.



A) Would not be the most appropriate answer.

- Establish and maintain continual professional relationships with clients.
- Avoid accepting any clients' "friend" requests.
- *Boundary Crossing* if RDs were to invite any of their clients as "friends".

Although web-based social networks are the norm these days, of which many RDs are members, it is important to establish and maintain continual professional relationships with clients. Since online social networks include information about an RD's personal life, it would be best to avoid accepting any clients' "friend" requests. In addition, it would also be a Boundary Crossing if RDs were to invite any of their clients as "friends" on any social networking website.



C) Would not be the most appropriate answer.

- Privacy settings on social network websites can control the type of information that certain “friends” are permitted to view.
- Does not solve the *Boundary Crossing—Dual Relationship* concerns.
- Best to avoid accepting any clients’ “friend” requests.
- RDs should recognize when they or their clients are crossing boundaries and take the necessary corrective actions.

Within most web-based social networks you can control the type of information that certain "friends" are permitted to view. You can do this through the privacy settings of your account profile.

However, these privacy settings do not solve the underlying Boundary Crossing--Dual Relationship concerns surrounding this practice question. As mentioned previously, it would be best to avoid accepting any clients’ "friend" requests.

It is certainly acceptable to be friendly and personable with clients to establish a rapport during group or individual counselling sessions. However, this is different from entering into a dual relationship where the RD and client socialize in a context outside of the RD-client professional relationship.

RDs have the responsibility to recognize when they or their clients are crossing boundaries and take the necessary corrective actions.



For more information on web-based social networks, consult the network websites.

Click [here](#) to view the *Jurisprudence Handbook for Dietitians in Ontario*.

For more information on web-based social networks, consult the network websites.

If you would like to read more information on Boundary Crossings, click on the link on this slide to view Chapter 10 of the *Jurisprudence Handbook for Dietitians in Ontario*.



**Thank you for taking the time to view the
May 2009 Practice Question of the Month – Boundary Crossings.**

**Please take a moment to click on the link below to fill out a short
survey regarding this five-minute e-learning module.**

Your feedback is greatly appreciated.

Please click [here](#) to access the survey.