

Should RDs Sell and Promote Products to End Users?



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The College is receiving increasingly more calls from members about the appropriateness of RDs promoting single brands, selling supplements and other products directly to their clients and on the internet. It is not illegal for RDs to sell supplements, and it is certainly within scope of practice of the profession to recommend supplements and other nutrition products to their clients. So what is the concern?

The concern is the conflict of interest created when the RD receives a personal benefit from promoting and selling a product to a client. In other words, if an RD recommends that a client take supplements and then sells the supplements at a profit, there is a risk that the motivation to make money from the sale of the supplements would influence the professional judgment of the RD. The conflict is between making money and making professional recommendations that are based solely on client need and client-centred principles of practice.

The College offers guidance for managing this type of conflict in the *Jurisprudence Handbook for Dietitians in Ontario* (Online edition, 2011, [Conflict of Interest, Chap. 9](#), www.cdo.on.ca > Resources), but has not yet defined in absolute terms what conflicts RDs must avoid altogether and what conflicts can be managed. The College Council has directed that this work begin and the appropriate professional standards and or professional misconduct provisions be developed. As always, the College would appreciate hearing your views.

Practicing Dietetics Less Than 500 Hours Over Three Years

In the last *résumé*, I had invited members to share their view about the College's proposed new process to identify and assess RDs who had not practiced 500 hours over three years. I very much enjoyed the conversations and the emails exchanged with RDs. Their personal situations varied but their commitment to safe and competent dietetic practice did not. They all appreciated that it does take deliberate effort to maintain practice competencies and that education and training is needed after a lengthy absence from dietetic practice. RDs who do not intend to return to dietetic practice favoured the approach of entering into an undertaking (agreement) with the College not to practice dietetics unless they completed the upgrading indicated through a College assessment. They accepted that the undertaking would be on the public Register of RDs.

The College will continue to explore how it will assess RDs who have not practiced 500 hours over three years and who are not willing to enter into an undertaking as above. Currently, the best advice the College has for RDs not practicing dietetics is to keep a log of activities that they consider practicing dietetics, including all learning and professional development activities related to the broad spectrum of dietetic competencies. (See the definition of practicing dietetics, *Jurisprudence Handbook for Dietitians in Ontario, Online Edition, 2011, Figure 4.1, p. 38*, at www.cdo.on.ca > Resources). Assessments will consider both practice as well as professional development activities.

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