



Addressing Member Anxiety about the PPA Process

Barbara McIntyre, RD
Quality Assurance Program Manager

The College’s Quality Assurance (QA) Program has three mandatory components to ensure that members are competent to practice throughout their careers as Registered Dietitians (RDs). All active members must participate. One of these components is the two-step *Peer and Practice Assessment* (PPA): Step 1 is a multi-source feedback method used to gather input from peers, colleagues and patients; and Step 2 involves a behaviour-based interview by a peer assessor who is an experienced dietitian and who is familiar with the member’s area of practice.

Annually, 10% of College members are randomly selected to participate in the PPA. Being selected causes anxiety for many RDs. However, despite the initial fears of the participants, the majority of RDs selected meet the minimum requirements for Step 1 and do not, therefore, need to submit to Step 2. Since 2012, only two members have required remedial direction from the QA Committee after their Step 2 assessment.

It seems to me that no amount of reassurance will totally eliminate the anxiety that RDs express when they are chosen for the PPA. However, I will address some common myths and concerns which I hope will help.

FOUR COMMON MYTHS AND CONCERNS

1. I will lose my license to practice if I do not do well in the PPA process.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The QA Program is meant to ensure competency and to provide direction to members who need help in certain areas of their practice. In such cases, the QA Committee can direct a member to successfully complete a specified continuing education or remediation program.

PPA results are not shared with anyone except the member. In fact, anything that happens in QA stays in

PPA Results for 2015

PPA ACTIVITY	Step 1	Step 2
Random Selection	241	NA
Deferrals	33 (13.7%)	1
Direct Patient Care	161 (77.4%)	12 (7.5%)
Non-Patient Care	47 (22.6%)	2 (4.3 %)
Deferrals from 2014	N/A	3
TOTAL PARTICIPANTS	208	17

QA! The only exceptions are where a member:

- fails to participate in the PPA process without requesting a deferral;
- fails to comply with direction from the QA Committee; or
- if in the opinion of the QA Committee, the lack of skill or judgement cannot be dealt with in the QA program.

In these instances, the member file would be referred to the Investigations, Complaints, and Reports Committee.

2. I work in long term care, ICU, NICU, etc., I cannot get patients to complete the surveys.

While it may be more difficult in some practices to obtain surveys, with few exceptions most members in the past four years were able to obtain the required number of surveys. The worst that could happen if you fail to obtain an adequate number of surveys despite your best efforts, is that you will simply go to Step 2 for a more in-depth look at your practice.

3. I failed Step 1, now all of my colleagues will think I am incompetent.

This is a comment I usually hear from members who move on to Step 2. First, you did not fail Step 1. Your scores were simply lower than the cut score. In fact, like all health professionals in Ontario, the scores of members

who move on to Step 2 are still high, but below the established cut score. In fact, most of the time, it simply means that your practice is different enough from others that it requires a different form of assessment. Having the PPA Step 2 ensures that the College does not rely solely on the Step 1 *Multi-Source Feedback Survey* to make a final determination of competency.

4. The questions in the surveys do not reflect my area of practice.

RDs from all major areas of practice participated in the development of the survey questions. Only the questions which the RDs felt applied to all areas of practice were

included. Further, anyone completing the PPA survey can choose *Not Applicable (NA)* where appropriate, and these questions are not included when tabulating the score.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

We are currently analyzing the data for the last four years of the PPA and, depending on the results of this analysis, we may adjust the cut score for Step 1. As the process evolves, we will be looking at different methods of scoring Step 1, and continually improving the overall PPA process for assessing members.

