



The Quality Assurance Program — Friend or Foe?

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The answer to that question may depend on your personal perspective. From the College's perspective, we strive to provide support to members to maintain their competence. At the same time, we need to ensure that all members who practice dietetics in Ontario have the necessary knowledge, skill and judgement to practice safely in the interest of public.

The *Regulated Health Professions Act* stipulates that each College must have a Quality Assurance (QA) Program with a self, peer and practice assessment, a professional development and/or continuing education component and a mechanism to monitor member participation and compliance with the program requirements.

CHANGING AND EVOLVING

For those who have been members of the College for a number of years, you have seen the QA Program evolve in response to member feedback, changes in the profession, new research and the need for the College to assure the public that we have programs in place to monitor RD competence.

Our *2-Step Peer and Practice Assessment* is a good example. In 2012, it was implemented to enable the College to reach more members for assessment without increasing the cost of the overall program. Since then, 668 RDs have been assessed in Step 1, through a multi-source survey of their patients and peers, and 5% proceeded to Step 2, which includes a behaviour-based interview for a more in-depth view of the member's practice and, if applicable, a chart review.

The assessment gives RDs valuable feedback about their practice from both colleagues and patients. Most members are stressed about being randomly selected for this process, but when they complete it, over 90% say they found it informative and helpful to their practice.

The *Jurisprudence and Knowledge Assessment Tool* (JKAT) is another tool that has evolved to reflect the changing practice environment. Members must complete the JKAT the

first year of their membership and every five years after that. Over 50% of members have now completed the JKAT twice. Most RDs find it useful because it ensures that they have the knowledge necessary to comply with the laws and standards that govern their practice. This tool has been adapted by many colleges both in Ontario and nationally.

The *Self-Directed Learning (SDL) Tool* is a key component of the program and the only one which must be completed by practising dietitians annually. Drawing on feedback from the members, it was redesigned two years ago. Over 90% of members state that the new SDL Tool is much more relevant to their practice. The QA Committee has also noted a positive change in the quality of the learning goals submitted by members.

MEMBERS PRACTISING FEWER THAN 500 HOURS

With the amendment to the *Registration Regulation* in 2012, members practicing fewer than 500 hours in the past three years are referred to the QA Committee for an assessment of their competence to practice. Members practicing dietetics under 500 hours in three years, submit a learning diary of their professional development activities, which, along with their practice hours, was considered in their competence assessment. Once they are deemed competent, these members are included in a smaller pool of members to be selected for the 2-Step PPA.

To date, 64 of 68 RDs who were not practicing dietetics elected to sign a voluntary undertaking "not to practice dietetics" to maintain their membership; four were assessed and found competent to practice and will be reassessed again in three years.

So, friend or foe? As the QA Program Manager, I can only say that we approach the quality assurance task required by law with fairness, objectivity and support for each member. We work hard to put a human touch in all our interactions with members. I encourage you to contact me to discuss any component of the QA Program.