

# What information would you value as a health consumer?



Mary Lou Gignac, MPA  
Registrar & Executive Director

As a parent, consumer and someone who guides others to health care providers, what information would you expect to have to make informed choices?

The College would like to hear your views as we continue to evolve its policies to regulate the profession in the interest of the public.

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The regulation of the profession of dietetics takes place within broad systems and societal environments. One example is the system of health professions regulation made up of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care; three government agencies including the *Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council*, the *Health Professions Appeal and Review Board* and the *Office of the Fairness Commissioner*, and the 26 health regulatory colleges. All are governed by the requirements, authorities and procedures set out in the *Regulated Health Professions Act (RHPA)*. Health professions regulation also takes place within the context of changing societal values and social behaviours. Information technology has definitely changed society's expectations about access to information, including access to information about the people and organizations who provide health care.

**Are you aware of the information that is currently accessible about dietitians, physicians and other health professionals? As a Registered Dietitian or a consumer of health professional services, what information would you value?**

All health profession colleges are required to maintain a register of members on their websites with, at minimum, the information specified by the RHPA. The College of Dietitians of Ontario By-Laws specify additional information to be included on the Register of Dietitians (for a complete list, refer to By-Law General 1, section 42). The register information covers:

- name and history of name changes while a member is practising;
- registration number;
- language(s) of practice;
- contact information for practice locations;
- history of registration (dates and reasons) including type of certificate, suspensions, revocations, and reinstatements;
- notation of a resignation and agreement not to practice when a member resigns during a proceeding such as an investigation, assessment, or a discipline or incapacity proceeding;
- discipline and incapacity proceedings including referrals to a panel, findings and reasons and a synopsis;
- terms, conditions or limitations on a certificate of registration including dates, reasons for them and any variations made to them;
- health professions corporation information parallel to the above.

If you search the college registers for some professions in Ontario, such as physicians, you will find that more information is available. Even so, some sectors of society are asking for

health profession regulatory colleges to provide more information to help people make informed decisions about the health professionals who provide their health care.

In January 2013, a series of Toronto Star articles<sup>1</sup> raised the question of whether the public is owed information about what was referred to as “serious cautions” issued to health professionals as a result of an investigation of a complaint or report about their conduct or competence.

1. The Toronto Star, 2013, January 11, *Doctors, dentists, pharmacists: The mistakes you can't know about*; January 14, *Health colleges given go-ahead to make cautions public*; January 16, *Health minister urged to tell colleges to publicize cautions*.



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A Health Information Custodian (HIC) is responsible for collecting, using and disclosing personal health information on behalf of clients. A HIC is generally the institution, facility or private practice health practitioner that provides health care to an individual.<sup>1</sup>

The *Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004* (PHIPA), sets out the responsibilities of the HIC and the rules for handling health information. Within the various practice situations, RDs need to determine if they are a HIC, as outlined in section 3 of PHIPA. This means that RDs who are in private practice programs and services that provide health care directly to clients are HICs and need to be aware of the rules under PHIPA.

PHIPA defines health care as “any observation, examination, assessment, care, service or procedure that is done for a

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**1. Call Mary Lou Gignac, 416-598-1725, ext 228.**

**2. Email: [gignacm@cdo.on.ca](mailto:gignacm@cdo.on.ca)**

**or**

**3. Share your views using this link:**

<http://www.collegeofdietitiansofontariosurveys.com/s/RegisterInformation/>

**4. You can also access the survey on the CDO website under News.**



## Are you a Health Information Custodian?

health-related purpose and is carried out or provided to diagnose, treat or maintain an individual’s physical or mental condition; to prevent disease or injury or to promote health; or as part of palliative care.” This includes making, dispensing or selling drugs, devices and equipment or other items by prescription, or community services provided under the *Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007*.

### **AGENTS OF A HEALTH INFORMATION CUSTODIAN**

Persons who are not HICs are often termed “agents” and would be required to meet the obligations of agents under the Act. PHIPA defines an agent as any person who is authorized by a HIC to perform services or activities on the HIC’s behalf and for the purposes of that HIC. An agent may include an individual or company that contracts with, is