

Registered Dietitian – A Protected Title

We wish to thank the Registered Dietitians who have brought to our attention individuals and organizations inappropriately using the dietitian title in Ontario.

The College's public awareness campaign has focused on educating the public about the education and expertise of dietitians, the benefits to the public of choosing a regulated nutrition professional, and the role of the College in regulating the profession for the benefit of the public. The campaign has also asked the public to make sure their nutrition advisor is a Registered Dietitian by checking for the RD after their name and verifying the Register of Dietitians to make sure they are registered with the College.

"Dietitian" and "Registered Dietitian" are the protected titles in Ontario. The College enforces the protection of the dietitian title by investigating reports received from members and from the public. Once a complaint is received about the unauthorized use of the RD title, a warning is sent to the unregulated individual and, if needed, their employer, with information about how the title of dietitian is protected in Ontario and the penalty for misuse of the title. Staff then monitors the case to ensure that corrective action was taken. This approach has been successful.

Below are some examples of the title protection cases that the College has addressed in the last two years.

INTERN USING RD TITLE ON WEBSITE

A member of the College noticed that one of her interns was using the title of dietitian on a website, prior to the completion of the internship. When the dietitian advised the intern that only members of the College can legally use the title of RD, Dietitian or Registered Dietitian, he corrected the website immediately. The RD reported the incident and the College followed up to confirm that the website had been corrected and to ensure that the intern was aware of the law and the potential penalties.

FORMER MEMBER WAS STILL USING THE RD TITLE

A member of the public advised the College about a former member who continued to use the RD title while doing private nutrition counselling despite having resigned from the College in 2008. The College sent the former member a letter requiring her to immediately stop her illegal use of the RD title. In addition, the College notified all insurance companies in Ontario that provide third party coverage for counselling dietitians that this person had not been registered with the College since 2008. The former member was also advised that if she continued her unauthorized use of the dietitian title, that the College would take further action, which could include newspaper advertisements or enforcement of the provisions of the *Regulated Health Professions Act* and the *Dietetics Act* through the courts.

The College has seen no further illegal use of the dietitian title from this former member.

NEWSPAPER ADVERTISEMENTS

The College received a report about newspaper advertisements that listed a contact person who was using the RD title and was not a member of the College. Upon further investigation, the College determined that this person was a distributor of "health juices" through a multi-level marketing company. The College sent a letter to the contact person in the advertisement and advised her about the law, the qualifications required for becoming registered with the College, and the penalties for misuse of the restricted title and asked to stop advertising herself as a dietitian.

The College received her assurances that she would no longer use the titles of RD, Registered Dietitian or Dietitian in her advertisements.

ADVERTISING WEBSITE FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

A member of the College reported seeing several non-regulated nutritionists advertised under the heading of "Nutritionists/Dietitians" on a website designed to help

connect consumers with a variety of health professionals. The website allowed visitors to narrow their search by specifying the health profession, and the region, which included the US, Canada, and Europe. Although some people who advertised under the Ontario section for *Nutritionists/Dietitians* were members of the College, several were not. The College contacted all of the nutritionists advertised under the Ontario section, as well as the CEO of the website. The nutritionists were asked to stop advertising under the heading of *Dietitian*, and the CEO was asked to facilitate changes to the website to allow nutritionists and

dietitians to advertise their services under separate headings. The College also notified officials at the *Academy for Nutrition and Dietetics* (formerly the American Dietetic Association) about this website.

Although the nutritionists may not have requested for their listings to appear under the heading of “Dietitian”, the College considers it the individual’s responsibility to ensure that their listing is appropriate.

When College staff revisited this website in February and March of 2013 to monitor it for change, it was unavailable.

How you can help protect the RD Title

USE YOUR RD TITLE

Changes to the College’s registration regulation in 2012 now make it mandatory for members to use the titles of Registered Dietitian or RD when referring to their dietetic practice. Seeing the RD title will help members of the public to recognize dietitians as the only regulated nutrition professionals.

CONTACT THE COLLEGE

As a regulatory body, the College is responsible to ensure that only members of the College use the dietitian title. It would be very difficult to do this work without your help. Please continue to let us know when you think a person may be using your professional title inappropriately.

EXERCISE YOUR RIGHTS AS A CONSUMER

The publishers of *Yellow Pages* and other directories have reacted more quickly to complaints received from their customers, as opposed to the College. If you make a report to the College about a non-RD appearing under the heading of “Dietitian” in the *Yellow Pages* directory, the College will take appropriate action. If you, yourself, also have a *Yellow Pages* listing, you are urged to contact your *Yellow Pages* representative to express concern that they are permitting the unauthorized use of your professional title. The College can provide you with a template letter if you need one.

Regulations for RDs to Order Lab Tests Unlikely in the Immediate Future

In 2009, as a result of our scope of practice review submission, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care was planning amendments to regulations to give RDs the authority to order laboratory tests in hospitals and community settings for the purpose of nutritional assessment and monitoring.

After extensive consultations with RDs, a list of lab tests was submitted to the Ministry in 2011 and the College has since been waiting for the Ministry to develop regulations enabling RDs to order the laboratory tests.

The College was recently informed that the Ministry is unlikely to make regulations enabling RDs to order laboratory tests in the immediate future under the *Laboratory and Specimen Collection Centre Licensing Act, 1990*. The Ministry’s decision is based on finances and other priorities, not the competence of RDs to order lab tests. RDs may continue to order laboratory tests through medical directives.

If you have questions or concerns on this matter, please contact the College’s Practice Advisory Service at: 416-598-1725 ext. 397, practiceadvisor@cdo.on.ca