

# Lab Ordering Authority Work Moving Forward



Melisse L. Willems, MA, LLB  
Registrar & ED

Everything we do should be aimed at serving the public interest.

I recently ended an email to a colleague with “I feel very fortunate to have a job where I have many opportunities to do my best work.” Here at the College, this is what we aim to do for members: give you the guidance and tools to help you do your best work.

The request to permit dietitians to order laboratory tests in support of nutrition assessment and treatment is one of those opportunities. If the request is granted, a more streamlined process for ordering and acting upon lab work will help make the client experience more efficient and effective. Follow-up will be easier and more direct. Clients will benefit because dietitians will be better able to do their best work.

In the world of professional regulation, the appropriate role of the regulator in relation to scope of practice expansion is often a topic of discussion. It is important for regulators to always remember that our mandate is public protection, not advancement of the profession. Everything we do should be aimed at serving the public interest. The lab test ordering project is an excellent example of how regulatory bodies can and should be involved in scope of practice initiatives. While direct lab ordering authority will likely improve the day-to-day experience for many dietitians, the principal beneficiaries of this initiative will undoubtedly be clients.

We are pleased to be working with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in support of this work, started a number of years ago by the College and Dietitians of Canada. Further updates about the project will be provided as they are available.

## RD Laboratory Test Authority Member Survey Results

A total of 1 534 RDs (38% of total membership) participated in the survey.

In 2008, the College and Dietitians of Canada made a submission to the Ministry regarding a proposed change to the dietitian scope of practice to include the authority to request laboratory tests. This authority did not proceed at that time. In September 2017, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care informed the College that as part of their *Patients First: Action Plan for Health Care*, they are reviewing scope of practice requests previously submitted, but not yet implemented, by regulated health professions.

In early November 2017, the College met with the Ministry staff responsible for activities related to the proposed scope of practice changes for dietitians. The Ministry provided their new *Model for the Evaluation of Scopes of Practice in Ontario* (MESPO), a rigorous framework that guides their decision-making regarding scope of practice change requests.

In applying its MESPO framework to the 2008 submission, the Ministry identified some areas that require further clarification. This new submission by the College is meant to

provide this additional information. To assist with answering the Ministry's questions, the College asked members for feedback in a survey that was opened from November 16 to Dec 6, 2017.

### FEEDBACK HIGHLIGHTS

In the survey, dietitians reported that they feel they have the necessary competence to work within their scope of practice to only order the laboratory tests that are relevant to a client's needs for nutrition assessment and monitoring.

- 96% of members who responded were in favour of proceeding with an open laboratory test ordering authority for RDs
- Members provided input into the processes and challenges of how laboratory tests are currently ordered within dietetic practice settings
- Suggestions were made for improving the processes to facilitate safe and effective client care and enable ongoing interprofessional collaboration and communication

- Ideas for future resource development were given to support RDs in the event that the authority is granted

### POTENTIAL RISKS

The survey respondents also indicated there may be some risk of duplication, over-testing and increased costs to the health care system. Members mentioned that RDs would need to ensure they are continually collaborating with other health care team members to avoid duplication and over-testing. Guidelines and member education would help alleviate these risks.

The College submitted the final report to the Ministry on December 21, 2017. The document is posted on the College website. [Access it by clicking here](#) or go to the [www.collegeofdietitians.org](http://www.collegeofdietitians.org) and enter "2017 CDO submission" in the search box. Further updates will follow as available.

**Thank you to all our members who responded to the survey and provided invaluable feedback.**

