



Professional Practice Questions

In an emergency, can I administer Glucagon?

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I am a RD working in a diabetes education centre and understand that administrating a substance by injection is a controlled act. However, I was wondering if in an emergency situation, such as an unconscious hypoglycemic client, RDs are allowed to administer Glucagon? Or, is a delegation needed to perform this procedure?

Yes, in an emergency, a dietitian can perform the controlled act of administering glucagon by injection to a client who is unconscious due to hypoglycemia. Under normal conditions,

a delegation would be needed to perform this controlled act. In an emergency, however, anyone can perform a controlled act.

RDs should know the organizational procedures for handling an emergency. To ensure RDs are safe and competent in performing the necessary procedures, the College fully supports any organizational training, such as, glucagon injection, applying a defibrillator and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

Need to Know

Controlled acts are health care actions that are potentially harmful if performed by an unqualified person. There are 13 controlled acts (soon to be 14) under the *Regulated Health Professions Act*. Under the *Dietetics Act*, RDs have the legal authority to perform only one — taking blood samples by skin pricking for the purpose of monitoring capillary blood readings — which falls within the controlled act of performing a procedure below the dermis.

The *Regulated Health Professions Act*, s29 (1) stipulates that anyone can perform a controlled act when:

- (a) rendering first aid or temporary assistance in an emergency;
- (b) fulfilling the requirements to become a member of a health profession and the act is within the scope of practice of the profession and is done under the supervision or direction of a member of the profession;
- (c) treating a person by prayer or spiritual means in accordance with the tenets of the religion of the person giving the treatment;
- (d) treating a member of the person's household and the act is a controlled act set out in paragraph 1, 5 or 6 of subsection 27 (2); or
- (e) assisting a person with his or her routine activities of living and the act is a controlled act set out in paragraph 5 or 6 of subsection 27 (2).

Not all Terminations of Employment Require a Report

Jane has been struggling with her work at a Family Health Team (FHT) unit for the past few months. Often, her client records are incomplete and, sometimes, vital information is missing. Moreover, referring doctors have not been receiving follow-up letters on their clients. Also, Jane spends too much time on the facility's computer for personal use.

The FHT manager has worked on these issues with Jane over several months, but there has been no substantial change. The Manager felt that she had no choice but to terminate Jane's employment. Does the manager need to report this termination to the College?

It is the responsibility of the employer, not the College, to determine whether the dismissal must be reported to the College. Not all terminations of employment require a report. A report is mandatory only for reasons of professional misconduct, incompetence or incapacity, defined as follows:

- **Professional misconduct:** a breach of honesty or trust, or failure to comply with fundamental standards of practice.
- **Incompetence:** a significant demonstration of a lack of skill, knowledge or judgment towards a client.



- **Incapacity:** a physical or mental illness, or substance abuse that impairs the dietitian's judgment.

If the manager's decision for terminating Jane's employment was solely based on her personal use of the FHT's computers during work hours, then, in most circumstances, this would be an organizational matter, and the manager would not have to report the dismissal to the College.

If the manager determined that the reason for the termination was the RD's failure to keep health records according to acceptable professional standards, either as a result of willful conduct or incompetence, then the manager would be required to submit a written report within 30 days of the dismissal. At times, problematic behaviours that result in termination of employment may suggest that the RD is suffering from a mental condition that is interfering with an appropriate conduct. This, too, would require the submission of a report.

The mandatory report provides the College with an opportunity to assist a dietitian with mentoring, education

Need to Know

- Not all terminations of employment require a mandatory report. The reason for mandatory reporting is to ensure public safety.
- A written report to the College is mandatory only when the reason for terminating employment is based on professional misconduct, incompetence or incapacity.
- It is the responsibility of the employer, not the College, to make this determination.

and training or to obtain treatment to ensure competent practice in the future. In extreme circumstances, the College may consider limiting or removing an RD from practice until the public is assured of her ability to practise safely, ethically and competently.

Richard Steinecke & CDO. *Jurisprudence Handbook for Dietitians in Ontario*, (Online, 2011), Chapter 3: p. 29-33.
<http://www.cdo.on.ca/en/pdf/Publications/Books/Jurisprudence%20Handbook.pdf>

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