

Abstract Title:

Dietitians' use of integrative medicine principles
Feldmann H¹, Morley C²
¹⁻² Acadia University, Wolfville, NS

Objective: The objective of this project, conducted for Senior Seminar, the capstone course for the Bachelor of Science in Nutrition, was to conduct pilot interviews with purposively identified Canadian dietitians on how they use principles of integrative medicine and to compare their perspectives to what was reported in the literature.

Methods: Four participants were located through the Dietitians of Canada member directory or the Integrative and Functional Nutrition Network using search terms including 'mindful' and 'integrative', and interviewed by telephone or Skype. Content categorization was performed on the interview material and four themes emerged: building relationships with the client; focusing on the whole person; using practices informed by evidence; and implementing all appropriate therapeutic approaches.

Results: Participants built relationships with clients by viewing the client as partner, being non-judgmental, and using motivational interviewing. When focusing on the whole person, participants identified the importance of the mind-body connection. Practices included mindful eating, body acceptance, yoga, and meditation. All participants used practices informed by evidence, notably with recommendations for natural health products. Participants indicated that when using practices for which there is not yet an evidence base, they inform clients of the potential benefits, and recommend proceeding only if no harm might arise. When issues arose that were outside of the participants' scope of practice, they made referrals to other care providers. Participants stated that they believed that integrative approaches increased the efficacy of their work. These findings are consistent with the principles of integrative medicine. **Conclusions:** Participants used methods within every category of integrative medicine consistent with the literature.

Significance to the field of dietetics: The principles of integrative medicine offer a framework for dietitians to consider incorporating into practice. Questions arising for further research are what classifies a dietitian as an integrative practitioner, and how many dietitians identify as such?