

Topic Area: Professional Standards and Skills

Abstract Title

Advancing Indigenous Cultural Competency in Dietetics: The Northern Ontario Dietetic Internship Program (NODIP) Experience

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Abstract

Purpose: To develop, implement, and evaluate cultural competency curriculum to enhance Indigenous cultural self-efficacy in internship.

Process: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action (December 2015) advocates for cultural competency training of all healthcare professionals, yet there is a gap in the dietetics profession. As a mandatory component of NODIP, cultural curriculum includes self-directed and facilitated learning activities and intentional, focused placements. Both generic and food/nutrition specific competency resources have been developed and evaluated along with placement and final program evaluations.

Systematic approach used: Five core generic competencies were developed and validated for allied health learners with additional food and nutrition domains validated with a national sample of Registered Dietitians (RDs) (n=120) who work in and/or have an interest in Indigenous health. National consultations also took place to inform integration of this curriculum across Canadian dietetic internships. Annually NODIP intern and RD preceptor feedback is collated to lead to refinements and enhancements including an online learning module (Qualtrics®). This platform allows for increased learner interactivity, and improved tracking of uptake and evaluation results. Ongoing program evaluations guide and inform curriculum planning.

Conclusions: This competency curriculum has increased cultural self-efficacy; more than 10% of NODIP graduates are working in Indigenous health across Canada.

Recommendations: While collaboration is needed by all dietetic educators to optimize cultural training for dietetic students, practicing dietitians need the requisite attitudes, knowledge and skills to deliver culturally competent services to meet the diversity of Indigenous populations and dietetic practice settings across Canada. There is a need to discuss current competencies and curriculum, and the opportunities and challenges of integrating Indigenous cultural safety in Canadian dietetic practice.

Significance to the field of dietetics: Well-defined dietetic cultural competencies and cultural self-efficacy can improve the capabilities of RDs to address the complex and significant nutrition issues amongst Indigenous peoples.