

## Topic Area: Professional Development

### Abstract Title

Perceived knowledge, skills, attitudes and barriers of Northern Ontario Dietetic Internship Program (NODIP) preceptors and preferred modes of training

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### Abstract

**Introduction:** Dietetic preceptors guide students' education and assess their performance during supervised practicums, a compulsory step to becoming a registered dietitian (RD) in Canada. The NODIP is a uniquely distributed model with three principal teaching hubs and over 20 communities who annually support interns. In 2018, NODIP celebrated its 11th graduating class; 74% work in the north and support the internship.

**Objectives:** 1) Determine the perceived knowledge, skills, and attitudes of NODIP preceptors; 2) Identify barriers to precepting NODIP interns; and, 3) Identify training needs and preferred training modes of NODIP preceptors.

**Methods:** A 17-item online survey (Qualtrics<sup>®</sup>) with Likert scale and open-ended questions adapted from a previous evaluation was distributed by email to 200 eligible NODIP preceptors in January 2019. Quantitative data analysis was completed with Microsoft Excel<sup>®</sup> using pivot tables. Open-ended questions were thematically organized. Ethical approval was received from Lakehead University.

**Results:** The response rate was 51.5% (n=103), with over half (56.2%) from clinical or public health settings, and one third (33.0%) having practiced for 6-10 years. The majority rated themselves good or excellent in professionalism (99.0%) and time management (91.3%). Excess workload, unsupportive work environments, and lack of compensation were common barriers through open-ended comments. Learner evaluation strategies, including giving and receiving constructive feedback; and, fostering critical thinking were identified as the top training needs (67.0% and 65.0% respectively). The majority (81.5%) would like to see training models explored; preferred modes of training were face-to-face (38.1%), online (34.5%), and videoconferences (27.4%).

**Conclusions:** These findings are consistent with current literature, and successfully identified areas for further research to improve the internship experience for learners and preceptors.

**Significance to the Field of Dietetics:** Results will guide future NODIP preceptor training initiatives as well as recruitment and retention efforts and can inform Canadian dietetic practicums on preceptor improvement.