

## Professional Development

### Understanding the need and interest to develop clinical dietitian business competencies

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**Introduction:** Clinical dietitians are increasingly challenged to demonstrate value in their contributions to patient outcomes and cost-effective solutions. Business acumen could be a valuable asset, yet may be an underdeveloped skill in direct patient care settings. Education or opportunities to develop business competencies may be limited. **Objectives:** To understand clinical dietitians need for and interest in developing business competencies.

**Methods:** A 19-question online survey was administered to registered dietitians (RDs) providing direct patient care, recruited via convenience sample from a national database. The survey questions queried participants practice, perceived comfort and use of business competencies, and interest and need for education. Content and face validity were assessed through pilot testing and expert consultation. Descriptive analyses were conducted.

**Results:** Of 1259 potential participants, 192 surveys were completed (15% response rate). Respondents practice settings included acute care in-patient (77), long-term care (43), ambulatory care (40), primary care (18), and rehab/other (14). The majority worked full-time (70%, 134), were 30-49 years of age (64%, 123), and practicing for > 11 years (66%, 127). Over half of respondents (53%, 101) had no formal business education/training; of those that did, most had taken undergraduate business electives (65/91). One-third indicated they use business skills in practice at least monthly (70), with advocacy for resources to improve patient care a frequent theme. Respondents rated their business skill competency and comfort from advanced/proficient (16%, 32), developing (43%, 82) to limited/no experience (41%, 78). The majority of respondents (71%, 136) expressed interest in business education tailored for RDs.

**Conclusions:** This survey demonstrates a need for and interest in developing business acumen among clinical dietitians.

**Significance to the Field of Dietetics:** These results have implications for the field of dietetics if we want to cultivate RDs who can successfully advocate for the profession and the services provided to patients, clients and communities.

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