

Employment and education experience of recent (2014-2019) Ontario and Saskatchewan dietetic graduates

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Introduction: Information on career paths and program satisfaction of dietetic graduates is needed to identify trends and emerging practice areas, support recruitment, and inform program quality and continuing education.

Objectives: To provide an overview of employment paths of graduates who completed training in Ontario and Saskatchewan to meet the educational and professional qualifications to write the Canadian Dietetic Registration Examination (CDRE) from 2014-2019.

Methods: A web-based survey was developed, with advisory committee input, pre-tested using cognitive interviews (n=5), and pilot tested with recent graduates (n=17). Respondents were recruited via universities, training programs, and Dietitians of Canada social media, website, and newsletter from June-September 2019.

Results: Of the 314 respondents, >75% of respondents were employed as dietitians at the time of surveillance and most (78%) had obtained employment as a dietitian within twelve months following training. The top three roles for first dietitian positions were health care teams (22%), in acute care hospital/in-patient (14%), and community health (14%). In addition, 33% had a secondary dietitian position with a different employer. The average length of first dietitian positions was 15 months, however, 38% of respondents changed primary positions within the first twelve months. In total, 83% were satisfied/very satisfied with the training provided. Areas with lower satisfaction included cultural competence and financial management. Furthermore, 91% felt they had the knowledge and skills and 80% felt they had the ability and opportunity to advance their dietetic career.

Conclusions: Survey results indicate a positive outlook for new graduates. While graduates expressed overall satisfaction with their dietetic training, cultural competence and business skills relevant to private practice were indicated as areas where more in-depth training would be of value.

Significance to the Field of Dietetics: The findings have importance for recent graduates, students considering entering the profession, educators and employers. Data from this survey may serve as a baseline for future surveys or comparison with other provinces.

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