

A timeline of Canadian dietetic history: the changes in dietetics and business and industry in the past quarter-century

T. Babic¹, E. Pellizzari¹, A. Proulx¹, Q. Zhan¹, L. Dietrich³, M. Wyatt², J. Randall Simpson¹, P. Brauer¹. ¹Department of Family Relations and Applied Nutrition, University of Guelph, Guelph, ON; ²Consultant, London, ON; ³Consultant, Haliburton, ON.

Introduction: Since the last recorded history of dietetics in 1993, business and industry dietetics has grown tremendously; therefore, it is critical to document dietetic business and industry history, as well as the practice area's contributions to dietetics in Canada.

Objectives: The objectives were to develop a timeline and record significant contributions and perspectives of dietitians in business and industry.

Methods: The initial development of the definition and timeline for dietitians in business and industry (dietitians with a primary focus in business and industry, including entrepreneurial dietitians and dietitians working for private companies in marketing, sales, advising, foodservice, nutraceuticals, or executive positions) was conducted through a literature review. Twenty-one key informant dietitians across Canada were contacted; 13 were interviewed using a semi structured interview format and the timeline as a basis for discussion. Interviews were audiotaped, transcribed, and coded for descriptive themes using thematic analysis; three researchers coded to ensure inter-rater reliability.

Results: The key informants were involved in various business and industry positions, including food service, food retail, business agriculture, food production, and nutrition communications. The key informants described working in business and industry for 7-44 years (mean [SD]: 22 [12.4]) in several provinces across Canada. Through thematic analysis, six meta-themes were derived from the interviews, including unique roles, career motivators, progression, external barriers, internal barriers, and significance of contributions. Dietitians had versatile roles in business and industry and were motivated to join the practice area for several reasons, including rewarding opportunities. Dietitians in business and industry experience numerous external and internal challenges, including a lack of recognition of the dietetic role in business and industry and a significant learning curve. Dietitians in business and industry emphasized a need for support for the practice area.

Conclusions: The versatile roles, career motivators, and significant challenges of business and industry dietitians were recorded. The contributions of business and industry dietetics to the profession were documented.

Significance: The recorded history of dietetics for this project will be disseminated through an online timeline resource available to the public and dietetic professionals to highlight business and industry dietitians and their contributions.

Funded by: University of Guelph. In-kind support from Dietitians of Canada.