

## Changes to consulting dietetics in Canada

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**Introduction:** Dietetics in Canada has greatly evolved since 1993 when a book describing Canadian dietetic history, *Canadian Dietitians: Making a Difference*, was published, suggesting a need for an update.

**Objectives:** The purpose of the current research is to collect and document the history of dietetics since 1993 on the topic of consulting, defined as dietitians working in individual or group private practice counselling.

**Methods:** Ten consulting dietitians from across Canada were interviewed. A draft timeline of key events was developed as a starting point for discussion. Interview transcripts were coded for descriptive and interpretive content. Inter rater reliability was ensured through discussion and comparison between three researchers.

**Results:** The Consulting Dietitians Network of Dietitians of Canada, previously the Consulting Dietitians of Ontario, is thought to be the first consulting dietetic network in Canada, established in the early 1980s. Five meta-themes emerged from the data: (1) challenges of consulting dietetics; (2) promoting the profession; (3) influence of COVID-19 on consulting dietetics; (4) flexibility and variety in consulting dietetics; and, (5) ability to provide a high level of care. Consulting dietitians promote themselves and the profession by advertising their services and through involvement in various forms of media. They are able to engage in a variety of different projects due to the flexibility provided by working in private practice. Additionally, counselling in the private sector allows consulting dietitians to support their patients on an individualized basis, often with short wait times and without a referral.

**Conclusions:** Since its inception, consulting dietetics has continued to grow into the relatively popular dietetic career choice it is today. Despite immense progress, there are still many challenges in the consulting dietetic profession including financial challenges, isolation, and competition between consulting dietitians and with unregulated nutrition professionals.

**Significance:** The results of this study have many relevant implications including identifying areas in which consulting dietetics have helped advance the field of dietetics, areas for improvement and key events that shaped the field. The online timeline produced from this project will be available to dietitians and the public to access and learn about the history of consulting dietetics.

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