

Creating an Interactive Timeline of Canadian Dietetic History: Integrating Primary Health Care

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Introduction: The last recorded history of Canadian dietetics was published in 1993. The integration of dietitians into primary health care was novel then, and consequently the historical record of this area of practice is lacking. Primary health care has since been the target of largescale healthcare reform, and dietetic practice has seen analogous changes. Documentation through the review of written records and recall of the dietitians involved is needed to establish key events and developments.

Objective: To record and describe the historical experience of dietitians working in primary health care from a Canadian perspective since 1993.

Methods: Eleven key informants (n=11), were interviewed. A draft timeline of dietitian involvement in primary health care was distributed to participants to guide discussion. Transcribed interviews were coded by five researchers for descriptive and interpretive content using thematic analysis in a social ecological framework. Discussion and comparison between researchers ensured reliability.

Results: Interviewees worked in five provinces, with 23-53 years of experience as practicing dietitians (\bar{x} =37.5 years). Eight themes emerged in analysis. (1) Advocacy, (2) Structural Issues, (3) Information Sharing, (4) Models of Care in Primary Health Care, (5) Working Conditions, (6) Professional Identity in Primary Health Care, (7) Facilitators and Barriers to Practice, and (8) Evaluation. Thematic analysis described the distinct roles of government, health care providers, and patients in the primary health care system, and their collective influence on dietetic practice.

Conclusions: Dietitians have been key in advancing primary health care reform in a variety of roles. Further informants will be interviewed to provide the desired national perspective.

Significance: This project will culminate in an online timeline resource for widespread educational, advocacy, and professional use. Documentation of the contributions that dietitians have made to primary health care is valuable when advocating for increased access to nutrition professionals in primary care settings.