

Topic Area: Patient Services

Abstract Title: Offering Unique Public Services at the Human Nutrition Research Unit: A Pilot Outreach Project
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Purpose: The Human Nutrition Research Unit (HNRU) at the University of Alberta is a state of the art facility supporting leading health research in nutrition. A full complement of energy metabolism, body composition, dietary assessment and intervention activities are performed on site for research purposes. Excess capacity that would allow use of these services outside of research was identified by HNRU staff. This information in combination with the University of Alberta's goal of "uplifting the whole people" supported exploration of offering select services to the public.

Process: A business plan was developed that included the value proposition to clients, proposed use of equipment, an environmental scan of other facilities offering similar tests, a marketing plan including pricing and promotion, a staffing plan, and financial projections. A preliminary market evaluation was conducted with the general public, Registered Dietitians, and personal trainers. Key services of interest identified were: 1) resting metabolic rate (RMR) measured by a whole body calorimetry unit; and 2) body composition (BC) measured by air displacement plethysmography (BodPod®). Special considerations included risk management, liability insurance, and appropriate methods of communicating client results with health care providers. The HNRU also sought advice and expertise from an existing Nutrition and Exercise Testing facility (NExT Lab) at Ryerson University.

Systematic Approach Used: A pilot project ran from Oct-Dec 2016 in partnership with a private-practice dietitian clinic. During that time 6 RMR and 4 BC tests were completed. An anonymous electronic exit survey captured client demographics and satisfaction with their experience. Of the 7 surveys completed, 100% of respondents indicated they were "Very Satisfied" with the service.

Recommendations/Conclusions: RMR and BC testing provide individuals with unique information that can be used to support lifestyle change and improve health. However, guidance and support from a Registered Dietitian is essential to utilize this information appropriately.