

Abstract Title:

I have multiple sclerosis, why do I need a dietitian?

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Objective: The objectives of this research were to conduct an in-depth interview with a person living with multiple sclerosis (MS), analyze interview material, and, based on the findings, determine the potential role of Registered Dietitians (RDs) within the circle of care. This research was completed for Senior Seminar, the capstone course for the Bachelor of Science in Nutrition.

Methods: An unstructured interview was completed with a person known to the researcher who had been diagnosed with MS in the preceding 24 months. The participant was asked to describe his experiences pre and post-diagnosis with health care providers, whether or not he had been referred to or consulted with an RD, and to describe any remaining nutrition-related concerns.

Results: The participant described a negative experience obtaining a diagnosis with MS at a specialty clinic, and frustration with drug therapies being the only offered treatment method. Although the participant had many questions about the validity of nutrition information from various sources related to MS, an RD was not on staff at the clinic, nor was consultation with an RD recommended. The participant chose a Naturopathic Doctor as his primary care-giver. An RD's specific skill-set could have been beneficial in providing nutritional care and recommendations, as well as interpretation of available nutrition information and advice.

Significance to the Field of Dietetics: The participant expressed a need to find positive, client-centered, well-informed nutritional care upon diagnosis. This raises questions about the experiences of others living with MS, and whether an RD might be of value in providing nutritional care from the time of diagnosis throughout disease progression. **Conclusions:** Further exploration is needed about the value of including an RD's specific skill set within the circle of care for those living with MS, and approaches to advocacy for their inclusion.