

Other

Environmental scan of Saskatchewan post-secondary programs offering nutrition education; an assessment of content and the role of the dietitian

Melisa Galbraith¹, Kimberlee Galus¹, Albert Kolios¹, Katie Wood¹, Lana Moore², Martina Richmond³, Roseann Nasser³

¹Nutrition Practicum program, Saskatchewan Health Authority, Regina, SK ²Saskatchewan Dietitians Association, Regina, SK ³Clinical Nutrition Services, Saskatchewan Health Authority, Pasqua Hospital, Regina, SK

Objective: The Saskatchewan Dietitians Association (SDA) would like to determine which post-secondary programs, offer nutrition courses/topics as part of the curriculum for the healthcare programs in the province.

Methods: In February of 2020, a survey was developed and distributed to 41 instructors who were involved in the development or delivery of the nutrition education within their perspective health care programs. The survey questions included demographics, general course information, course content, nutrition education in the program, and students' capability to provide nutrition screening/counselling after graduation. Close-ended questions were tabulated as percentages, and open-ended questions were collated into themes.

Results: The response rate was 48.8% (n=20/41). More healthcare programs make nutrition education a requirement for their students (n=11/19) then are mandated to have nutrition education for accreditation (n=5/17). Education is delivered through a variety of methods including didactic sessions (n=17/19), case studies (n=8/19), and self-studying (n=5/19). Nutrition education was most often taught by a faculty member (n=13/19), and only by a Registered Dietitian (RD) 21.1% (n=4/19) of the time. Nutrition content was developed by an RD for 42.1% (n=8/19) of programs. The importance of RDs is recognized by programs as 66.7% (n=12/18) report students know when to refer patients/clients and 64.7% (n=11/17) know when to consult RDs for information.

Conclusions: Saskatchewan post-secondary health care programs are teaching nutrition and include a variety of nutrition topics. Time was identified as a limitation for the content. Programs tended to include nutrition education in their curricula even if it was not specified for accreditation, which indicates its importance for allied health professionals. This study provide insight into the type of nutrition content taught at various post-secondary health care programs in Saskatchewan and who teaches this content.