

Advancing Racial Equity in Dietetics: A Narrative Review

Contact Us:

Primary author: Soha Mohammad

(smoham38@uoguelph.ca)

Secondary author: Ella Moris

(emorri07@uoguelph.ca)

Corresponding Author: Anisha Mahajan

(anisha.mahajan@usask.ca)

Soha Mohammad¹, Ella Morris², Sharmini Balakrishnan³, Ananya Banerjee⁴, Maude Perreault^{5,6}, Anisha Mahajan⁷

¹Department of Biomedical Sciences, University of Guelph, ²College of Biological Science, University of Guelph, ³Registered Dietitian in Public Health, Ontario, ⁴School of Population and Global Health, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, McGill University, ⁵Department of Nutrition, Faculty of Medicine, Université de Montréal, ⁶Centre Jean-Jacques-Gauthier, Centre de recherche du CIUSSS-Nord-de-l'Île-de-Montréal, ⁷College of Pharmacy and Nutrition, University of Saskatchewan

INTRODUCTION

- Over the past several decades, Canada and United States have become increasingly culturally diverse driven largely by economic growth and migration.¹
- This demographic shift has important implications for dietetics, as registered dietitians (RDs) play a central role in addressing nutrition-related health outcomes for multicultural populations.²
- Despite these changes, racialized individuals remain significantly underrepresented in the dietetics workforce, limiting the profession's ability to deliver culturally responsive and equitable care.²

OBJECTIVE

- To examine research on racial diversity within dietetics education and practice using the Health Workforce Equity Framework (HWEF).
- To identify barriers and strategies that support inclusion across the professional pipeline.

METHODS

- A narrative review was conducted using the following databases including OVID MEDLINE, PubMed, and EMBASE.
- The articles were analyzed based on the domains of the HWEF including 1) workforce composition, 2) working conditions, 3) educational mission, 4) provider distribution, 5) serving high-need patients, and 6) addressing root causes of health inequities.
- The final analysis for this narrative review used n=29 articles that were based on the HWEF.

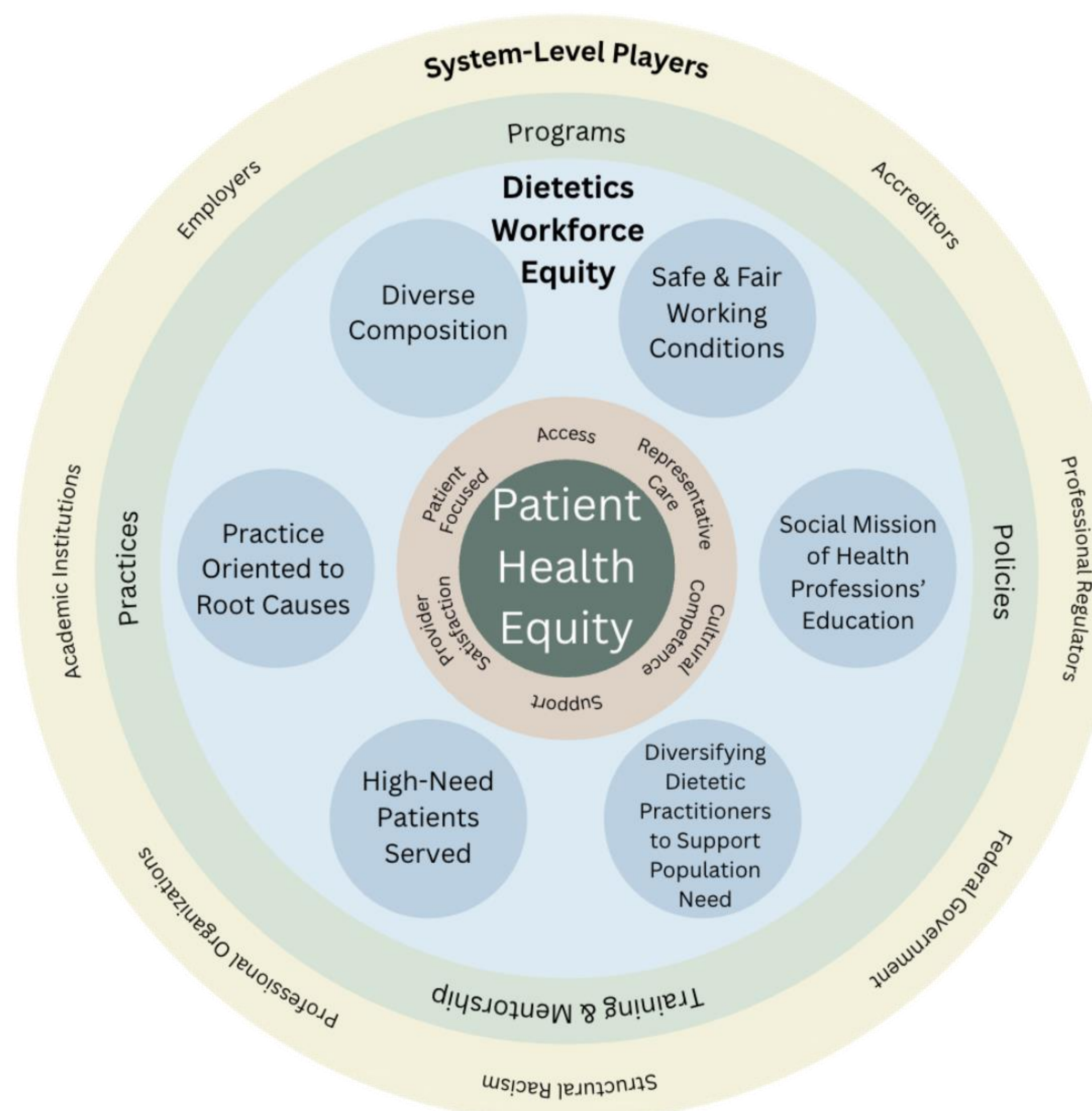


Figure 1: Key themes based on the Health Workforce Equity Framework

REFERENCES

1. Besnlian A, Goldenberg A, Plunkett SW. Promoting Diversity within the Dietetics Profession through a Peer Mentorship Program. *J Acad Nutr Diet.* 2016 Feb;116(2):198-202. doi: 10.1016/j.jand.2015.07.018. Epub 2015 Sep 2. Erratum in: *J Acad Nutr Diet.* 2016 Apr;116(4):726. PMID: 26341960.
2. Burt KG, Delgado K, Chen M, Paul R. Strategies and Recommendations to Increase Diversity in Dietetics. *J Acad Nutr Diet.* 2019 May;119(5):733-738. doi: 10.1016/j.jand.2018.04.008. Epub 2018 Jun 12. PMID: 29907344.
3. Felton, T. M., Nickols-Richardson, S. M., Serrano, E., & Hosig, K. W. (2008). African-American students' perceptions of their majors, future professions, and the dietetics major and profession: a qualitative analysis. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, 108(7), 1192-1197. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jada.2008.04.022>
4. Laramée S. H. (2005). Diversity is changing the face--and future--of dietetics and the nation. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, 105(2), 193. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jada.2005.01.001>
5. Stein K. (2013). The educational pipeline and diversity in dietetics. *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*, 113(5 Suppl), S13-S19. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jand.2013.02.015>
6. Warren, J. L. (n.d.). Diversity in dietetics matters: Experiences and obstacles en route to registered dietitian practice. University of Akron.

RESULTS

- The study findings reveal that persistent underrepresentation remains a concern for racialized individuals in both dietetic education and professional practice areas.^{3,4,5}
- Key barriers: lack of mentorship, limited exposure to dietetics careers, and structural racism embedded in admissions and credentialing.^{5,6}
- Promising strategies include inclusive mentorship programs, culturally inclusive curricula, and paid supervised practice models.² Research suggests that few initiatives demonstrate a sustained impact; likely due to lack of long-term funding and institutional accountability.²

CONCLUSION

- This study highlights the critical need for structural reform to improve racial representation in dietetics education and in subsequent professional pathways.
- Addressing these inequities requires a coordinated effort from educators, leaders, professional associations, and policymakers to implement inclusive teaching practices, which will strengthen accountability for diversity.

SIGNIFICANCE

- Developing a diverse dietetic workforce in Canada is essential to enhancing patient and client provider relationships, fostering patient/client trust, and improving care and health outcomes of a population.