



Evolving Roles of RDs

Fall 2011 Annual Workshop in Review

INCREASED ATTENDANCE THIS YEAR!

The College held 26 Workshops across Ontario on *The Evolving Role of RDs in Changing Practice Environments*. This year, attendance surpassed the College's annual 20% target with 756 RDs (23% of membership) and 45 interns in total.

RD ROLE AND TASK DECISION FRAMEWORK

Regardless of their practice area, RDs are being asked to take on new tasks and roles. This workshop allowed participants to gain insight into how various factors impact their practice. The purpose of the workshop was to encourage RDs to embrace their full scope of practice.

The *RD Role and Task Decision Framework* (next page) is based on questions that were discussed in the workshops that RDs should consider before taking on a new task or role. Workshop discussions often centered on the first question in the Framework: "is this task/role really within an RD's scope of practice?" For instance, which health professional should be conducting swallowing assessments – RDs or speech-language pathologists? Or, do blood pressure and '60 second' foot assessments fall within the dietetic or nursing practice?

The *Regulated Health Professional Act* (RHPA) was intentionally drafted to enable overlapping scopes of practice, which allows for client-centered services and interprofessional collaboration. It is important to ensure there are mechanisms in place and enough flexibility to allow an RD's role to evolve in collaboration with other health care professionals as intended in the RHPA. Using the decision framework on the next page as a resource, RDs can exercise professional judgment to evaluate new tasks and role, and evaluate the conditions under which they should perform them in compliance with the law.

ATTENDEES FEEDBACK

The majority of participants (92%) felt that the College has undertaken activities that support RDs in their practice. And, 86% of the attendees found the questions in the decision framework valuable and helpful in determining when it would be appropriate to accept a particular role or responsibility:

"Like the decision tree (and) this will be helpful when determining whether tasks are within our scope of practice or is it a matter of competence / education"

"I found the experience-sharing to be most valuable. We are often unaware of what others are doing in their practice environments. This is a safe space to talk about issues we are facing and get feedback on ways to move forward."

"Always a good review of the regulatory issues and a chance to brush off the cobwebs, since although we practice within our boundaries with our ethics and competencies intact it is always good to review issues amongst colleagues."

"The workshops always give food for thought and help us to think outside the box a bit more."

Some members requested more interactive sessions, webinars and that examples be incorporated from all practice areas (less clinical focus). We appreciate the feedback and will try to incorporate suggestions for improvements in future workshops and other resources.

Thank you for your participation and input. The workshop presentation slides are available on the CDO website at: www.cdo.on.ca > Members > Practice Advisory Program > Annual Workshops.

RD Role & Task Decision Framework

RDs are encouraged to consider requests and opportunities for assuming new tasks and roles in a way that respects clients and interprofessional collaboration (IPC), and that appreciates the full scope of dietetics practice. This table shows how answering four central questions when

considering, “Can I, or should I do this?”, can be informed by focusing on client-centred services.

The College of Dietitians of Ontario is a resource for RDs as they explore new areas of practice.

SHOULD THE RD PERFORM THIS NEW TASK OR ROLE?	DECISIONS BASED ON CLIENT-CENTRED SERVICES
<p>IS THE NEW TASK OR ROLE WITHIN THE RD SCOPE OF PRACTICE?</p>	<p>Applying a narrow interpretation of the dietetic scope of practice based on traditional roles may sometimes conflict with client needs. When it does, RDs are encouraged to consult and carefully consider whether a restrictive interpretation unnecessarily limits how clients are served. The RD scope of practice statement in the <i>Dietetics Act</i> and the College definition of practising dietetics enables a very broad spectrum of activities as the scope relates to using the knowledge of food and nutrition, and working in areas related to nutritional conditions and disorders and the prevention and treatment of these.</p>
<p>ARE THERE ANY LEGAL OR ORGANIZATIONAL BARRIERS TO PERFORMING THIS NEW TASK OR ROLE?</p>	<p>Organizational policies, the <i>Regulated Health Professions Act</i>, <i>Dietetics Act</i>, <i>Public Hospitals Act</i>, and other legislation limit who can do what and under what conditions (e.g. an order or prescription). Flexibility exists within this organizational and legal framework and is intended to be used to meet client needs as long as safety and quality are given due consideration in the decision-making.</p>
<p>DOES THE RD HAVE THE REQUIRED SKILLS & COMPETENCE TO PERFORM THE NEW TASK OR ROLE?</p>	<p>Competence includes knowledge, skill and judgment. Competent execution of roles and tasks is an essential professional responsibility to ensure clients benefit from practice activities and that they are not harmed. New areas of competence can be acquired at any time during a professional’s career. If client needs are better served by having an RD perform new tasks or roles, then the RDs must consider how to acquire the new area of competence. This is an important part of the decision and planning around new tasks and roles. Simply to say “no” based on existing competence may well fail to meet client needs.</p>
<p>WHAT ARE THE IPC POSSIBILITIES?</p>	<p>Decisions should be made in the clients’ best interest, taking into consideration scope of practice and what is intrinsically related to it, organizational and legal flexibilities, and the acquisition of competence. The outcome may not lead to a simple “yes” or “no”, but open to interprofessional possibilities.</p>