

# Dietitians' role and scope of practice: an opportunity to optimize team-based primary care with interprofessional education

Denis Tsang, RD<sup>1,2</sup>, Serena Beber, RD<sup>1,3</sup>, Jaclyn Adler, RD<sup>4</sup>, Wendy Madarasz, RD<sup>5</sup>, Raphaëlle Laroche-Nantel, RD<sup>6</sup>, Éliane Bouchard<sup>6</sup>, Joie Shaw, RD<sup>6</sup>, Jane Tyerman, RN<sup>6,7,8</sup>, Mary Anne Smith, RD<sup>9</sup>, Isabelle Giroux, RD<sup>6,10,11</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Toronto, DFCM, <sup>2</sup>Woodbridge Medical Centre Family Health Team, <sup>3</sup>South East Toronto Family Health Team, <sup>4</sup>Hamilton Family Health Team, <sup>5</sup>Clinton Family Health Team, <sup>6</sup>University of Ottawa, <sup>7</sup>Queens University, <sup>8</sup>Canadian Alliance of Nurse Educators Using Simulation, <sup>9</sup>Dietitians of Canada, <sup>10</sup>GrEoPS, <sup>11</sup>Institut du Savoir Montfort

## BACKGROUND

“Team Primary Care–Training for Transformation” is an initiative to enhance the capacity of primary care practitioners through improved training, team supports and planning tools. The initiative represents a partnership of over 65 health professional and educational organizations across Canada with the aim of creating and improving interprofessional education related to primary care.

Dietitians are the health professionals with expertise in food and nutrition. Sixteen percent of dietitians in Ontario work in interprofessional team-based primary care settings. However, their perception of the interprofessional collaboration within team-based primary care (PC) settings has not recently been assessed.

## OBJECTIVE

To assess dietetic interprofessional collaboration within Canadian team-based PC from the perspective of dietitians working in team-based PC in Canada.

## METHODS

- Dietitians were invited to complete an online national survey on Survey Monkey, which was developed and reviewed by an expert working group of PC dietitians, dietetic educators and interprofessional healthcare practitioners;
- The survey was distributed by e-mail, via various professional dietetic networks, and through social media;
- The survey opened September 2023. This poster presents data up to February 2024. The survey can be accessed via the QR codes below:

Survey (English)



Survey (Français)



## RESULTS



73 dietitians from across Canada completed the survey, with 47 from Ontario



Almost all dietitians (n=70) agreed that interprofessional collaboration improves patient-centered care in team-based PC settings



The vast majority of dietitians (n=65) reported team meetings foster communication among team members from various disciplines



Only about half of the dietitians (n=37) felt other professionals understand their scope of practice



Less than 60% of dietitians (n=43) felt their role is well-understood in team-based primary care



The interprofessional competencies indicated as the most challenging to implement in PC settings are team disagreement processing (n=29) and role clarification and negotiation (n=33)

## DISCUSSION

- Dietitians play a key role within a variety of team-based PC settings.
- Dietitians use their clinical nutrition expertise to support patients of all ages with a range of nutrition and health concerns. They work closely with other PC providers, playing an essential role in interprofessional teams to ensure comprehensive patient care.
- There is a need for increased interprofessional education about dietitians' scope of practice
  - To enhance effective team-based primary care, improving collaboration and ultimately positively impacting patient care.
- These results highlight a need for PC managers and health education leaders to increase interprofessional health care providers, specifically regarding the scope of practice and integral role of dietitians in team-based PC.

## CONCLUSION

Interprofessional education about dietitians' scope of practice and role within team-based PC settings will help optimize functioning and ultimately the quality of patient care.

Dietitians contribute to team-based PC as clinical nutrition experts, skilled in preventing and managing nutrition-related health problems. When their role is fully understood and they are empowered to practice to their full scope, interprofessional PC teams are better equipped to meet the comprehensive needs of their patients.

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## CONTACTS:

- Denis Tsang, MSc, MAN, RD, CDE, CHE  
DenisTsangRD@gmail.com
- Serena Beber, RD, MScCH, CDE, HPE  
serena.beber@utoronto.ca
- Isabelle Giroux, PhD, RD, BEd, PHEc, FDC  
igiroux@uottawa.ca