Call for more authentic images of dietitians online - Media release

Most of the high-ranking images of dietitians found on a popular search engine are not an authentic representation of the profession, new research has revealed.

The media and those choosing images for online health hubs are encouraged to use pictures of dietitians in more authentic settings, as research presented today at Dietitians Australia's National Conference calls for the need to transform the representation of dietitians on the internet.

A cross-sectional study, led by Judi Porter, Fellow of Dietitians Australia and Professor in Dietetics from the School of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences at Deakin University, saw researchers perform a Google incognito image search for the term 'dietitian' on two separate occasions 17 months apart.

Of the images examined, dietitians were most often depicted as a young, Caucasian female pictured alone in an indistinguishable location with food.

While these are consistent for the predominant age and gender of the profession, Judi highlights that there's no one-size-fits-all when it comes to dietitians.

"The reality is that dietitians come from all walks of life. This is important, because we all want to work with someone we can relate to when considering how to make food changes," said Judi.

"However, without having pictures that showcase the diverse range of dietitians and their work settings, people may not have a realistic idea of what a dietitian does."

“There’s so many avenues where dietitians can take their careers. They can work in hospitals, with sporting teams and communities, open their own private practice, consult to industry and food service, and conduct research – just to name a few.”

Four out of every five images showed a dietitian with food, and other common props included medical equipment like a stethoscope, clipboard, microscope and being dressed for laboratory work.

However, if you haven’t seen a dietitian before and expect to be greeted by someone in a lab coat, Judi advises that’s highly unlikely.

“It’s not the norm that you would find a dietitian wearing a lab coat, using a stethoscope or peering into a microscope,” said Judi.

“Instead, like anyone else, they’ll be dressed for their work setting, and use equipment that helps them perform their role. This might include food packets and other visuals to support a food discussion, or equipment to support their research, such as tools that measure exercise output.

“Dietitians are everyday people with a passion for food, science, and supporting others to use nutrition to improve their health.”

Follow #DA2021 for a snapshot into ‘What’s Possible?’, as dietitians virtually share their research findings.

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Media enquiries

For media enquiries and interviews, contact our Media Officer on 0409 661 920.

Note to editors: Dietitians Australia is the leading voice of nutrition in Australia, representing dietitians nationally and advocating for healthier communities. Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) is the only national credential recognised by the Australian Government as the quality standard for nutrition and dietetics services in Australia.