

# Oncology Role Statement

## Role Statement for Accredited Practising Dietitians practising in the area of Oncology

Developed by members of the Oncology Interest Group

### Introduction

Accredited Practising Dietitians (APDs) are recognised professionals with the qualifications and skills to provide expert nutrition and dietary advice. APDs are qualified to advise individuals and groups on nutrition related matters.

APDs have sound university training accredited by DAA, undertake ongoing professional development and comply with the DAA guidelines for best practice. They are committed to the DAA Code of Professional Conduct and Statement of Ethical Practice, and to providing quality service.

APD is the only national credential recognised by the Australian Government, Medicare, the Department of Veterans Affairs and most private health funds as the quality standard for nutrition and dietetics services in Australia. It is a recognised trademark protected by law.

### Purpose of this Role Statement

The purpose of this Role Statement is:

- To define the role an APD may fulfil when working in the area of Oncology
- To promote the knowledge and expertise of an APD, broadly and in the area of Oncology
- To advocate for dietetic services

### Knowledge and skills in this area of practice:

Entry level dietetic competencies ensure all APDs can conduct comprehensive assessments (assessment, diagnosis, intervention, monitoring and evaluation). Within a particular practice area, APD skills and knowledge will range from entry level to highly skilled. Within this continuum APDs can either fully manage the patient, seek support (clinical supervision, secondary consultation, mentor) to continue seeing the patient or choose to refer the patient on.

The following is a list of skills and knowledge required to work in the Oncology area:

### Skills:

- Ability to undertake an appropriate and tailored assessment of an individual including consideration of disease type and stage, treatment, social situation, physical function and anthropometry, biochemical requirements, psychosocial needs and other relevant clinical assessments.
- Estimation of nutrition requirements (energy, macronutrients, micronutrients and fluid) relevant to the individual's stage of treatment and disease process.
- Ability to provide evidence based, specific and tailored advice to the individual with cancer, and their carer, considering the changing physiological and psychosocial needs related to disease state and treatment (chemotherapy/biological therapies, radiation therapy, immunotherapy, stem cell transplantation, surgery) and psychosocial needs.

- Working within the person-centred paradigm taking into account the individual's personal needs, choices and goals, relevant to the stage of disease e.g. curative versus palliative intent and transition to end of life care.
- Advanced critical and clinical reasoning skills in the area of oncology nutrition, taking into consideration the complex medical nature of patients undergoing treatment for cancer.

### **Knowledge:**

- Understands the impact the cancer diagnosis and treatment have on ingestion, digestion, absorption and utilisation of nutrients.
- Aware of the expected type and timing of nutrition-related side-effects (both acute and late effects) from standard treatment modalities for cancer diagnoses.
- Knowledge of best-practice management for nutrition-related side effects from cancer and cancer treatments.
- Knowledge of evidence based pathways of care for patients with cancer based on cancer and treatment type including recognition of appropriate time points for nutrition screening, assessment, intervention and monitoring.
- Aware of appropriate goals for nutrition intervention based on the treatment plan (e.g. curative versus palliative intent, inpatient vs outpatient) and the individual's position in the cancer journey (e.g. newly diagnosed, active treatment, survivorship, end-of-life).
- Recognises and addresses nutritional considerations to reduce the impact of late effects and long term chronic health implications associated with cancer diagnosis, treatment, and associated diet and lifestyle changes.

### **Activities entry level APDs would conduct:**

- Completing the Nutrition Care Process, including relevant skills in nutritional screening (e.g. MST) and assessment (e.g. PG-SGA, grip strength, use of body composition tools e.g. CT where appropriate and available) in collaboration with the patient, family and MDT.
- Estimating a patient's nutritional requirements, appropriate to the individual considering cancer type, treatment modality and other relevant clinical considerations.
- Managing nutrition impact symptoms resulting from cancer itself and/or the treatment.
- Appropriate care planning, discharge planning (where appropriate) and referral to appropriate services and/or programs (e.g. palliative care, survivorship programs; community lifestyle programs such as those offered via Cancer Council).
- Providing education and intervention around nutritional considerations to reduce the impact of late effects and long term chronic health implications associated with cancer diagnosis, treatment, and associated diet and lifestyle changes.
- Consideration of long term health implications and adjustment of nutrition care plans across the treatment and survivorship trajectory, in collaboration with primary care teams.

### **Activities APDs working at a higher level would conduct:**

All of the above plus:

#### **Continuum of care duties**

- Complex patient care, particularly those requiring enteral/parenteral nutrition (e.g. head and neck cancers, haematological cancers, gastrointestinal cancers, lung cancers, complex surgery) and cancer types with complex needs (e.g. neuro-endocrine tumours).
- Care coordination of patients with complex nutrition needs and/or a high level of dietetic input within a multidisciplinary team.
- Working with foodservice to ensure appropriate dietary provision for inpatients (e.g. food safety considerations in neutropenia, low iodine diets, texture-modified diets).

Any individual practitioner should refer to the [Scope of Practice Decision Tool](#) to determine if a task is within their scope of practice.

[Link to entry level competencies](#)