

# Nutrition Support Role Statement

Developed by members of the Nutrition Support 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, groups and organisations on nutrition-related matters.

APDs have university training accredited by Dietitians Australia (DA), undertake ongoing professional development and commit to evidence-based practice. They comply with the [DA Code of Professional Conduct and Statement of Ethical Practice](#) and commit to providing quality service.

APD is the only national credential recognised by the Australian Government, Medicare, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the National Disability Insurance Agency 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 nutrition support
- To promote the knowledge and expertise of an APD, broadly and in the area of nutrition support and beyond [National Competency Standards](#)
- To advocate for dietetic services

## KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS IN THIS AREA OF PRACTICE

Entry level dietetic competencies ensure all APDs can conduct assessments, diagnose nutritional issues, and develop, monitor and evaluate interventions. 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 to continue seeing the patient or refer the patient on.

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

### Skills

- Monitoring and interpretation of anthropometric changes in patients who are mobile and immobile to assist with evaluating responses to the delivery of nutrition support. This includes completion of physical assessments to examine for signs of muscle and subcutaneous fat depletion.
- Interpretation of laboratory tests pertaining to nutrition and hydration status.
- Estimation of nutritional requirements (energy, macronutrients, micronutrients and fluid) in accordance with the underlying medical diagnosis/condition.

- Effective advocacy and communication skills with all relevant stakeholders including patients, families and the multidisciplinary team to assist in patient-centred decision making regarding nutritional needs.
- Development of appropriate recommendations for nutrition support interventions including route of feeding, duration, medical state, patient perspective and quality of life.
- Skills in food fortification techniques and micronutrient supplementation with the ability to provide tailored advice to achieve nutritional support goals.

## **Knowledge**

- Understanding the interrelationship between various medical conditions, medications and their impact on macro- and micro-nutrient digestion, absorption and metabolism.
- Knowledge of gastrointestinal anatomy and how it is affected by certain surgical procedures (e.g. bariatric surgery, colorectal surgery).
- Up-to-date knowledge of the available range of oral supplements, enteral and parenteral nutrition formulations and the ability to select the most appropriate formulation based on a patient's individual nutritional needs.
- Understanding of the appropriate indications and contraindications of nutrition support interventions available to patients (i.e. short-term vs long term requirements, gastric vs jejunal feeding, enteral vs parenteral nutrition)

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

- Nutritional screening, assessment including the diagnosis of malnutrition and development of nutrition care plans and monitoring.
- Identification of indications and contraindications for various nutritional support methods, including choosing an appropriate feeding formula, route of administration, and development of enteral and parenteral regimens. An entry level APD would not be expected to have TPN prescribing right additionally, joint care with a more senior dietitian would be expected for complex TPN patients.
- Provide education to other health care staff, the patient and carers/family, about the nutrition support regimen, administration of nutrition support and care of their tube/line and tube site.
- Discharge planning and post-discharge care where applicable (e.g. Home Enteral Nutrition Service).

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

Many of the following activities require additional training and accreditation as well as agreements with local health services to act within an advanced scope of practice.

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

- Identification of, insertion, care and removal of enteral feeding tubes/devices and tube sites.
- Measurement and interpretation of indirect calorimetry to measure energy expenditure and skills in the methods of body composition assessment including using handgrip dynamometers, ultrasound, and interpretation of CT images.

- Order writing of parenteral nutrition and nutrition related pathology to help monitor nutrition progress. This may include prescription of orders to adjust micronutrient and electrolyte dosing.
- Planning and coordination of dietetic services in the area of nutrition support across both the inpatient and outpatient setting. This includes ordering and stock maintenance of nutrition support products.
- Determining and monitoring clinical standards and benchmarks for nutrition support services, including the development of nutrition support resources and policies.
- Designing, implementing and disseminating nutrition support related research.

## REFERENCES

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