

Nutrition Support Role Statement

Role Statement for Accredited Practising Dietitians practising in the area of Nutrition Support

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 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

- To define the role an APD may fulfil when working in the area of the area of Nutrition Support
- To promote the knowledge and expertise of an APD, broadly and in the area of Nutrition Support
- 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.

Skills:

- interpretation of laboratory tests pertaining to micronutrient status
- physical assessment of nutritional status
- estimation of nutritional requirements (energy, macronutrients, micronutrients and fluid)

- may vary depending on the area of clinical practice the dietitian is working in (eg neurology, intensive care, disability), and might include techniques for the insertion and care of a variety of enteral feeding devices; adjustment of the composition of parenteral nutrition formulations; communication strategies for disabled clients, and techniques for assessing and/or monitoring aspects of nutritional status in different conditions

Knowledge:

- understanding of physiology and the impact of disease on macro- and micro-nutrient digestion, absorption and metabolism, as well as clinical knowledge of the particular area of practice (such as adult or paediatric neurology, surgery, orthopaedics, gastroenterology, or intensive care medicine etc)
- familiarity with the available range of enteral and/or parenteral nutrition formulations as well as oral supplement products, food fortification techniques and micronutrient supplementation

Activities entry level APDs would conduct:

- nutritional screening, assessment and monitoring, formulation of nutrition care plan
- estimating an individual's nutritional requirements
- choosing an appropriate feeding formula, route of administration, and regimen
- providing education to other health care staff, or to the patient and carers/family, about the nutrition support regimen and/or administration of nutrition support and/or care of their tube/line and tube site
- discharge planning and post-discharge care where applicable (eg Home Enteral Nutrition service)

Activities APDs working at a higher level would conduct:

- insertion and care of enteral feeding tubes/devices and tube sites (if competency formally demonstrated)
- planning and coordination of dietetic services in the area of Nutrition Support, whether for inpatients or at home after discharge
- determining and monitoring clinical standards and benchmarks for Nutrition Support services
- education of other organisation staff, and consultation with other professionals, community agencies, government bodies or the media, on nutrition support related issues
- development of nutrition support resources and policies
- design of food service menus and selection of the nutrition support products to be used by the organisation
- ordering and stock maintenance of nutrition support products

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

References:

[Link to entry level competencies](#)

Appendix 1 – Background

Nutrition Support is an area of dietetic practice that involves the nutritional management of people who cannot meet their nutritional needs with normal oral intake alone. They may require specialised food or drinks (oral nutrition support) to fortify or supplement what they are able to eat, or may receive nutrition via tube feeding (enteral nutrition support) or intravenously (parenteral nutrition support). There are significant risks associated with nutrition support, particularly when an individual is relying on it to provide all of his or her nutrient and fluid requirements. Problems such as micronutrient deficiencies, dehydration, overhydration, overfeeding or malnutrition could occur if nutrition support is not managed by an appropriately-qualified professional. An APD ensures that the nutrition support regimen is carefully designed to meet all of these needs, and provides close monitoring where necessary, to identify and manage any problems that arise.