

Management and Leadership Across Practice

HOD Executive Summary

House of Delegates

February 2010

Being employed in management positions has many positive benefits, including increased remuneration, increased authority, increased value, increased job satisfaction, sense of accomplishment and, the positioning of Registered Dietitians (RD) or Dietetic Technicians, Registered (DTR) in key decision-making roles. For these reasons, management skills are imperative to all areas of practice for the success of the profession.

Mega Issue Questions: How can we effectively influence and encourage RD/DTRs to hold, aspire to hold, or function in a leadership or executive role in all practice environments?

Expected Outcomes: Participants at the May 2010 House of Delegates Meeting will: (1) understand and value management and leadership skills as essential components of all areas of practice; and (2) recommend methods to internalize a management and leadership mindset that assures career success.

This mega issue addressing management and leadership across practice was revived under the resurrected Management Work Group appointed by the House Leadership Team in August of 2008. This work group felt that sufficient progress on the issue had not been made since the previous 2003 mega issue, *The Future of Management in Dietetics*. The vision of this group is that "Management competencies are elevated in all areas of dietetics practice with maximized professional effectiveness and enhanced career growth." In order to accomplish this vision several recommendations were made, including that the House of Delegates (HOD) revisit the issue of management at the Spring 2010 House of Delegates Meeting, to which the HLT agreed.

Management is typically defined to include functional activities such as organizing, planning, leading, and monitoring, with emphasis on supervision of work. Those activities may engage one person or many and involve consistent skill sets across all departmental, organizational, and professional boundaries. Goal setting, strategic thinking, and measuring outcomes are common in all aspects of dietetics practice and are key tasks in both management and administration. *Administration* can be defined as the universal process of organizing people and resources efficiently so as to direct activities toward common goals and objectives. Administrative skills are developed with advanced training and experience, and often involve greater levels of risk, high level decision-making and a broad scope of resources. Managers often assume administrative roles with the accumulation of experience. *Leadership* is the capacity to direct the operations, activity, or performance to guide someone or something along a way. Alan Keith of Genentech states that, "Leadership is ultimately about creating a way for people to contribute to making something extraordinary happen."

The Phase II Dietetics Education Task Force reiterates that management is a critical component across all advanced practice in dietetics and is tied to salary levels in every area of dietetics practice. Advanced-level practitioners need high-level skills in communications, information technology, finance and budgeting, leadership, management principles, marketing, human resources, and organizational development/administration.

Management tools are critical in the dietetics toolkit. Although often taught in conjunction with foodservice systems, these concepts are pertinent in any practice area. Pace *et al* contended that dietetics leaders are defined by their ability to communicate a vision to the team and to inspire individual members to take responsibility for team actions and decisions. Barker, Arensberg, and Schiller

noted, “The cry for dietetics leadership has been heard for decades” and described the need for dietitians to serve as leader-managers, integrating both the role of leader and manager into one. Employers are looking for RDs to be prepared to think critically, solve problems, and make decisions. Flexibility, enterprising and versatility are qualities that employers seek. The broad area of “management” skills continues to be the top priority from employers’ perspectives.

The 1995 and 2000 CDR employer studies identified the core trend to be the need to do more and better with less. Employers will rely on professionals who know how to focus their efforts on the organization’s outcomes and bottom line – and who know how to show professional and public audiences that they are doing so. Organizations relentlessly focus on outcomes and results. The skills employers are looking for in entry-level dietetics practitioners include 1) the need for entry-level professionals to take on leadership roles more quickly; 2) an entrepreneurial approach from practitioners to achieve needed results and 3) putting a premium on efficiency, prioritizing, and decision-making.

The quality of leadership and management provided within the healthcare industry will be pivotal to its success over the next five years. The health sector represents a major career opportunity for talented and effective managers and leaders.

Challenges identified by RDs echo a persistent theme—the need to improve the recognition, respect, and reward received by those in the dietetics profession. Creating career laddering and holding positions in management and leadership will enhance the recognition as well as the satisfaction of practitioners. Greater responsibilities associated with positions of leadership within organizations have been demonstrated to enhance salaries and recognition.

RDs and DTRs have the potential to hold positions in management and leadership. The Commission on Accreditation for Dietetics Education standards focus on knowledge, learning outcomes and competencies which include management, administration and leadership. Preparation should apply management skill development across all practice areas. The Commission of Dietetics Registration includes sufficient management and business codes to be used to develop portfolio plans with management and leadership skill enhancement.

Dialogue is needed to determine strategies for preparing dietitians to be effective managers and leaders, to pursue higher level positions, and to endorse the value of management and leadership to their personal success and to that of the profession. An emphasis on honing our skills in technical aspects of practice will not assure us of involvement in decision making within our organizations, which may impact our positions or our practices.

Discussion Activity

- Think of a leader (outside of dietetics) you admire. What are the skills and attributes that make that leader successful and admirable?
- Think of a leader specifically in the profession of dietetics that you admire. What are the skills and attributes that make that leader successful and admirable?
- Looking at the list of skills and attributes you identified for these leaders. Which skills and attributes are reflected in your colleagues within the profession of dietetics and which are missing?

Talk with your delegate(s) about the skills and attributes you identified and your ideas regarding this mega issue. Delegates will be discussing this issue at the Spring 2010 HOD Meeting (May 1 and 2). Delegate contact information is available at www.eatright.org/leaderdirectory.

To obtain the full backgrounder “Management and Leadership Across Practice”, visit www.eatright.org/HODMegalssues.