

# New strategies needed to help healthcare providers gain knowledge to counsel patients on diet

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A new scientific advisory from the American Heart Association reviews current gaps in medical nutrition education and training in the United States and summarizes reforms in undergraduate and graduate medical education to support more robust nutrition education and training efforts.

"Despite evidence that physicians are willing to help educate patients about healthy eating and are viewed as credible sources of diet information, they engage patients in diet counseling at less-than-desirable rates and cite insufficient knowledge and training as barriers, even during their peak learning years," said Karen E. Aspary, M.D., M.S., the lead statement author and assistant professor of medicine at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island.

The National Academy of Sciences recommends undergraduate medical students receive a minimum of 25 classroom hours dedicated to nutrition [education](#), but a 2013 survey found that 71 percent of medical schools provide less than the recommended hours and 36 percent provide less than half that amount.

The advisory provides examples of successful approaches currently being used to integrate clinical nutrition throughout undergraduate and graduate medical education courses, instead of a one-time course. In addition, it also provides information about assessing nutrition

knowledge and competencies and outlines nutrition resources and continuing medical education activities.

"Nutrition is a dynamic science with a rapidly evolving evidence base requiring continual updating and renewed translational efforts. The competencies outlined in this statement provide a foundation with flexible options for advancing [nutrition](#) knowledge and skills across the learning continuum, and a toolkit for medical school curriculum directors, program directors, faculty, trainees and students," said Linda Van Horn, Ph.D., R.D., co-chair of the writing group and professor of preventive medicine at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago, Illinois. The advisory is published in the American Heart Association journal *Circulation*.

Provided by American Heart Association

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