The future of dietitians—using integrative medicine

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Integrative medicine is a quickly expanding field of health care that emphasizes nutrition as a key component. Dietitians and nutritionists have an opportunity to meet workforce demands by practicing dietetics and integrative medicine (DIM). A new JACN article, The Next Generation of Dietitians: Implementing Dietetics Education and Practice in Integrative Medicine describes a DIM education program and practicum. The review article appears in the *Journal of the American College of Nutrition* (*JACN*), official publication of the American College of Nutrition.

Dietetics and integrative medicine (DIM) programs have the ability to create a practicum to better educate dietitians and nutritionists. This article looks at the results of a DIM inter-professional nutrition education program between the University of Kansas Medical Center (KUMC) Department of Dietetics and Nutrition (www.dietetics.kumc.edu/) and KU Integrative Medicine (integrativemed.kumc.edu). This partnered program provides training that builds on the strong foundation of the Nutrition Care Process and adds graduate-level educational and practicum experiences in foundational integrative medicine knowledge, including nutritional approaches from a systems biology perspective, nutrigenomics, and biochemistry as the core knowledge to understand the root cause of a chronic disorder and to choose appropriate nutritional tools for interventions.

When asked about the benefits to patients, author Leigh Wagner, MS,

RD, LD, said, "Many patients and clients I work with are searching for information that they can't often find from a doctor. Their doctor might say "eat healthy" but there isn't an action plan behind it. Doctors may get two hours of nutrition education and two years of pharmacology, so their first line of therapy isn't always going to be a dietary prescription. Patients want to be proactive, and they often don't know how to navigate all the diets and fads and media information that inundates our daily lives. "

Leigh Wagner, MS, RD, LD concludes "Patients will benefit from their doctors referring them to dietitians skilled in Integrative Medical Nutrition Therapy. Graduates of our certificate program can provide this specialized, personalized care for patients with chronic diseases."

More information: "The Next Generation of Dietitians: Implementing Dietetics Education and Practice in Integrative Medicine," *Journal of the American College of Nutrition* DOI: 10.1080/07315724.2014.979514

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