



The Backbone of Our Profession

IN RECENT MONTHS, WE HAVE spotlighted credentialed nutrition and dietetics practitioners who are at opposite ends of the career spectrum: student members and veterans who have been with the Academy for 50 years or more. This month, I'd like to focus on the backbone of our profession and organization: members who are in the midst of their careers.

Who are our mid-career members? According to Academy's 2019 Compensation & Benefits Survey of the Dietetics Profession (available for free to all members):

- The median age of an Academy member is 41 years.
- The typical member has worked in the field for 12 years.
- 53% of all registered dietitian nutritionists (RDNs) have earned master's degrees or higher.
- We work in a wide range of jobs. The survey identified 60 core position titles in 7 distinct practice areas.
- And we are making more money than ever before. On an annualized basis, the survey showed an RDN's median full-time salary in 2019 equated to \$68,600 per year—an 8% increase since the Academy's most recent survey in 2017. For NDTRs, the annualized 2019 salary was \$45,800—up 9% since 2017. For comparison, the 2-year inflation rate as measured by the Consumer Price Index was 4.69%.¹

Mid-career members make solid contributions to our profession, make a difference for their clients and patients, and bring about change—while still having decades ahead of them.

MORE DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE

Eric Paul Meredith, MEd, MS, RDN, LDN, CHES, of Chicago, IL, who became an Academy member in 2010, says he has seen “more emphasis being placed on individualized nutrition (genomics), the socioecological model (accounting for an individual's environment as a determinant of health and behaviors) and culturally

appropriate recommendations based on one's cultural preferences versus the general population.”

A public health/community nutrition RDN who works as a regional SNAP-Ed coordinator for the US Department of Agriculture, Meredith plans to increase his knowledge through research and improving his patient-centered approach. “In the coming years, I see the profession becoming more diverse and inclusive and innovative in its approach to working with clients and the public, such as through telehealth and social media.”

PARTICIPATE IN NEW WAYS

Wendy Phillips, MS, RD, CD, CNSC, CLE, NWCC, FAND, of St George, UT, regional vice president for Morrison Healthcare, says “it seems like just yesterday” that she became an Academy member in 1998. “I have been very thankful to witness an expanded scope of practice for RDNs,” she says.

Phillips foresees the need to embrace technology “and to participate as health care team members in new and exciting ways. The professional network I have through Academy membership has helped to further my career and provided me with lifelong friendships.”

MOVE BEYOND TRADITIONAL ROLES

Joey Quinlan, MSH, RD LDN, FAND, of Orlando, FL, a market director for nutritional services for AdventHealth and an Academy member since 2006, cites the growth of RDNs working outside traditional roles as a significant development in recent years. “If you ask me this in 5 years, I have a feeling my answer will be the growth of nutrition intervention reimbursement across the continuum of care.”

Looking to the future, Quinlan says: “With increases in licensure, expansion of reimbursement, and expanded order writing privileges, dietitians are moving into a primary caregiver role rather than a supporting role. We are becoming proactive clinicians, leading on quality improvement, improving outcomes, generating revenue, and educating our communities.”



Terri J. Raymond

REMAIN EVIDENCE-BASED

In Virginia Beach, VA, Jim White, RDN, ACSM, EX-P, is the owner of Jim White Fitness and Nutrition Studios. He says the nutrition and dietetics landscape has “drastically changed” since he became an Academy member in 2000. “New technology allows RDNs to connect with our clients easier—apps and devices like [wireless-enabled activity trackers and smartwatches] help us get better metrics from our clients and motivate them. And with sensationalism at an all-time high, it is more important than ever that RDNs stick to our evidence-based practice.”

STAY RELEVANT

I hope all members, all RDNs, and all nutrition and dietetics technicians, registered, at all stages in our careers, will follow the advice of these members in our ever-changing workplace. As Jim White puts it, amid fierce competition, “RDNs need to take risks, think outside of the box, and reinvent ourselves to stay relevant.”

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Reference

1. Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Compensation & Benefits Survey of the Dietetics Profession 2019. Chicago, IL: Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. <https://www.eatrightstore.org/product-type/books/compensation-benefits-survey-of-the-dietetics-profession-2019>. Accessed February 25, 2020.