

Dietetic Technicians' Role in the World of Metabolism

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Introduction

Registered dietetic technicians (DTR) attain the basic knowledge of nutrition and complete the DTR program. A DTR's role is to assist the registered dietitian (RD) with a variety of duties. DTR's can optimize nutrition care while reducing the workload for RD's. DTR's work in a variety of settings and bring significant benefit to RD's in the ability to provide effective nutrition management. Metabolic nutrition therapy is a multifaceted area of nutrition that requires much attention from the metabolic RD. There is much demand on the RD to support metabolic patient in their complex nutritional needs.

Methods

The metabolic clinic at Ann and Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago manages ~475 diet treated metabolic patients. The nutrition staff consists of 3 fulltime RD's and 1 DTR. The DTR has been able to support the RD's in both clinical and non-clinical settings. Assistance with nutrition assessments and diet analysis is one of the main aspects of support the DTR provides. The DTR assists the RD with obtaining medical formula coverage for patients through insurance and coordination with the state formulary. The DTR also helps communicate with formula vendors to provide formula and food samples. Patient have benefited through education on metabolic diets conducted by the DTR. Patient adherence has also improved with the DTR identifying and contacting patients that need lab work or need scheduling for clinic visits. Other metabolic clinics who currently have DTRs, each maintain one diet tech that supports two dietitians. DTRs mainly manage the PKU population that range from 150-200 active patients. Have similar job tasks but differ depending on state policies regarding formula and low protein foods.

Results

The RD's and metabolic patients have greatly benefited from the DTR's support. RD's can work at their highest acuity and focus on the critical needs of newly diagnosed patients or patients that are admitted with a metabolic crisis. Patient adherence has improved with patient education as well as consistent follow up and reminders that the DTR provides.



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Conclusions

The ever-increasing metabolic patient population and the intricacies of the metabolic nutrition care requires much attention from the metabolic RD. The addition of the DTR has been tremendously helpful in supporting the RD's and metabolic patients. Metabolic clinics should establish a DTR position to help assist the RD provide effective nutrition management to better support the metabolic patients.