

Navigating Future Practice: Equipping RDNs and NDTRs for Interprofessional Collaboration

Forecasts & Trends

Food and nutrition are major contributors to the prevention, management, and treatment of health. The necessity of Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDNs) and Nutrition and Dietetic Technicians, Registered (NDTRs) in interprofessional practice will be accelerated by *Food is Medicine*, a philosophy grounded in preventive medicine and disease management that strongly connects nutrition and healthcare for better patient outcomes.

The public perception is that referring providers are knowledgeable about food and nutrition. However, medical preparation and training does not include adequate nutrition education; thus referring providers are entering the workforce without knowledge of the RDN/NDTR scope of practice and how the RDN/NDTR is a valuable member of the healthcare team. RDNs and NDTRs have a unique opportunity to collaborate with referring providers to educate them on recognizing nutrition-related problems and appropriately coordinating patient care through referrals to RDNs/NDTRs.

This brief forecasts the urgency for RDNs/NDTRs to develop and foster collaborative partnerships with referring providers through interprofessional education and practice. As value-based care becomes the prevalent healthcare model, the focus of medical treatment is shifting to team care, patient outcomes, and overall well-being. Interprofessional education and practice are cornerstones of value-based care that will uplift the skills and importance of the credentialed nutrition and dietetics practitioners.

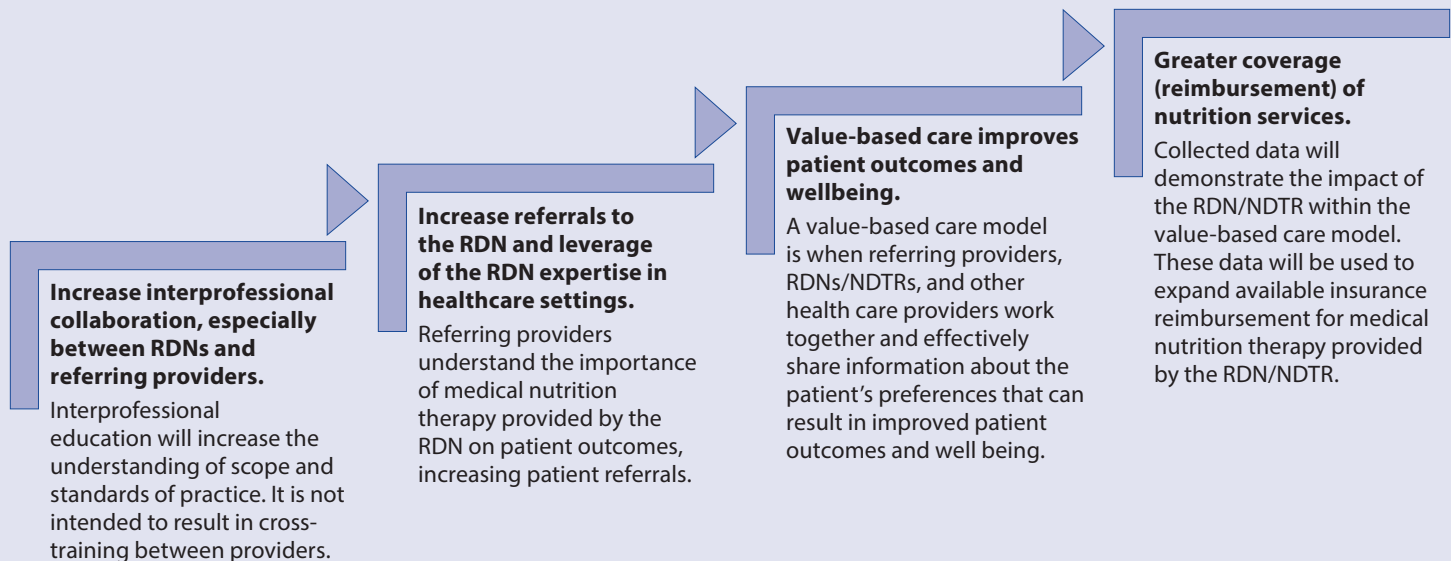


Interprofessional Education (IPE):

Learning about, from, and with other professions to effectively collaborate to improve patient/client care. It is not learning how to do the work of others. For example, providing nutrition education in medical schools is not so physicians can replace RDNs; it is to improve collaborative care through understanding the scope of practice within each health specialty and how the RDN/NDTR can be utilized within value-based care as a key team member to support the nutrition needs of the patient.

Implications for Practice

What are the implications of Interprofessional Collaboration for the nutrition profession?



What can we do to ensure Interprofessional Collaboration becomes our future?

- Find opportunities to connect with decision makers around nutrition through other professional organizations and advocacy.
- Obtain a NPI (National Provider Number) so referring providers, health care plans, and employers can find you to identify you as a healthcare provider.
- Learn how to advocate more effectively through joining DPGs, MIGs, affiliates, or Academy affinity groups.
- Lead formal or informal conversations with your interprofessional team. If in a clinical setting, share the Referrals to an RDN: Primary Care Provider Toolkit provided by the Academy.
- Connect with higher education or medical school faculty in other disciplines to identify opportunities to provide education on nutrition and/or support in practice-based research.
- Develop curriculum in higher education or continuing education for decision makers, including referring providers and public health advocates, on the importance of the RDN/NDTR.
- Organize shared engagements among professionals within your work setting (i.e., shared medical appointments, stakeholder meetings).

The 120,000 RDNs/NDTRs that make up the profession represented by the Academy can utilize the opportunities provided in this brief to help move the profession forward and increase the role of the RDN/NDTR in interprofessional collaboration. Email futurepractice@eatright.org to promote your work and inform the Academy of the ways you are engaging in interprofessional collaboration to help expand the toolbox for all.



This is part of a series of briefs from the **Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Council on Future Practice** describing change drivers that will affect the future of the profession. This brief is intended to familiarize readers with this specific change driver and its implications, so that readers can share this knowledge with their organizations. Learn more about environmental scanning for change drivers and trends [here](#).