



#### Welcome to the 8th DIETS Thematic Network Newsletter.

Welcome to the 8th DIETS Thematic Network Newsletter which aims to bring you an overview of the 3<sup>rd</sup> DIETS Conference.

It only seems a short while ago when we all first met at the University of Plymouth, UK for the 1<sup>st</sup> DIETS Conference. We have come a long way in the past three years and, in 2009, the 3<sup>rd</sup> DIETS Conference was held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> September in Lisbon, Portugal. It provided an opportunity to participate in an excellent range of presentations, to catch up with those now regarded as 'old friends' and to meet new colleagues.

The theme of the Conference was 'Dietitians (Net)working with Others' and brought together 136 campus-based and practice placement Dietitian educators from over 20 countries worldwide.

Excellent speakers from across Europe presented on a number of interesting and relevant topics and we have tried to give you a flavour of these in this edition of the newsletter. The use of IT technology enabled us to have two presenters who could not have made it to the Conference in person; Professor Ray Jones from the University of Plymouth, UK and Professor Sandra Capra from the University of Queensland, Australia and Chair, Board of Directors, International Confederation of Dietetic Associations contributed as if they were actually present. Each speaker's abstract and powerpoint presentation are available on the DIETS website, <a href="http://www.thematicnetworkdietetics.eu">http://www.thematicnetworkdietetics.eu</a>. These are well worth setting aside a little time to review.

The specialist seminars, led by several of the speakers, provided the opportunity to discuss how higher education institutes can work more closely with practice placement educators to ensure coherence and common thinking across a number of topics.

Original poster presentations were on display throughout the Conference and 47 posters of extremely high quality were available throughout.

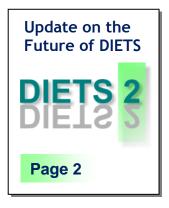
This newsletter also brings good news from Karin Hadell, President of EFAD and Anne de Looy, Coordinator of the DIETS Thematic Network. At the General Meeting of EFAD in September, the European Dietetic Competence Statements were unanimously adopted and a commitment given that EFAD would continue to support the DIETS Thematic Network and website. Karin and Anne have included an update in this edition of the newsletter which gives the full details.

We hope that this edition of the DIETS newsletter will be informative for those of you who were unable to attend the Conference and will inform discussions on the future direction of dietetics for all dietitians.

Finally, we would like to thank the Almond Board of California and the other sponsors (Pingo Doce, Nutricia and Alpro Soya) for their support of the Conference. A summary of the presentation made by the guest speaker sponsored by the Almond Board, Dr Guissy Mandalari is included in this newsletter.

Enjoy the Newsletter.

DIETS Thematic Network Dissemination Group









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November 10<sup>th</sup> 2009

We are writing with some good news following the disappointment of the DIETS2 bid.

At the General Meeting of EFAD in September, two significant events took place. Firstly, the European Dietetic Competence Statements were unanimously adopted. These describe the competences required of a Dietitian at the point of qualification. This is an important step for the Dietetics profession in Europe and is a very notable outcome for the Network itself. All who worked on the Competence Statements, in particular the Dietetics Associations across Europe, and those who undertook the translation of the Statements deserve our thanks.

Secondly, the September EFAD General Meeting agreed, in principle, to a re-structuring of EFAD, which will enable it to become even more influential within Europe. Within the new structure, an Education Committee was formally proposed. Commitments were made to support the DIETS Website as part of the EFAD Website and to formally put the DIETS Network and its partners into a Committee within the EFAD structure. At a subsequent meeting, Terms of Reference were proposed and a small budget set aside to support a second bid (for DIETS2) and to carry on some of the DIETS work, albeit at a slower pace. The formal decision on the new structure will be taken by the EFAD General Meeting in February.

This, of course, means that the DIETS database and web-site will remain and continue to be used as a resource for the education of dietitians within Europe and elsewhere. A Committee formally responsible to EFAD and all its partners is also a very significant advance.

Please expect to remain involved as without your support we do not have a Network!

We are also now working on the final report of the DIETS Network which you will be able to read in due course.

Thank you for all your support so far and we hope you enjoy reading about the third DIETS conference - the biggest ever!

President of EFAD, Karin Hådell

Kirin Haceu

and

Anne de Looy, Co-ordinator of the DIETS Network









#### SESSION 1:

## IMPORTANCE OF LIFE LONG LEARNING FOR THE FUTURE OF DIETETICS

Session 1 was opened and very ably chaired by Irene Mackay, the Chair of the DIETS Network Management Group.

The first speaker was Dr Philippe Roux, Deputy Head of the Health Determinants Unit, European Commission, who spoke about the European Commission approach to nutrition, overweight and obesity related health issues. Dr Roux summarised the current activities of the European Commission in this field which include:

- Consumer education, e.g. through better labelling on food products;
- Making the healthy option available, e.g. by making fruits and vegetables available to schools;
- Encouraging physical activity, e.g. by encouraging community initiatives and by raising awareness of Community funds to develop the physical environment to encourage walking/cycling and other forms of activity;
  - Focusing on priority groups and settings, such as children and schools;
- Developing the evidence base to support policy making, such as by carrying out research into behaviour change in relation to food and nutrition;
- Developing monitoring systems, such as by working with the WHO to identify effective local actions.

These actions are framed by a Commission Strategy which was published in May 2002, and by the subsequent Council Conclusions adopted in December 2007. The Commission works to support Member States in their own policy development, as well as activities to foster action from a range of stakeholders, such as those organised under the umbrella of the Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health, and through projects financed by the Public Health Programme.

The next speaker was Professor Rosemary Richardson, Chair of the Practice Development Network for Allied Health Professions, Glasgow, Scotland. Professor Richardson spoke about the specific challenges for dietetics practitioners, education providers and work place practice developers that have arisen due to the implementation of policies designed to improve the quality of healthcare. Inherent to these changes is the need for strategic leadership and performance management. The implication for undergraduate dietetics programmes is that students' understanding of patients' dietetic 'risk' and 'need' and their ability to explicitly define the rationale for clinical decision making in managing/declining duty of care needs increased emphasis. Adopting this approach is key to measuring dietetic outcomes (qualitative, quantitative), providing an evidence base for intervention and in defining caseload capacity throughout a professional dietetics career.

The final speaker in Session 1 was Professor Anne de Looy, the Coordinator of the DIETS Thematic Network who spoke on the current status and future recommendations for life long learning (LLL) in dietetics. Dietetics is continually advancing as new knowledge becomes available and dietitians find themselves in areas of practice they had not anticipated when they left their initial education and training. Dietitians have to maintain their relevance and 'employability'. Integral to this is the adoption of lifelong learning as a key element in CPD and as an important tool in maintaining employability. The DIETS Education Mapping Questionnaire completed in 2009 indicated that 57% of the 41 Partner Higher Education Institutions that responded taught their students about reflective practice. Practicing Dietitians ranked being 'proactive in identifying learning opportunities and engaging in a process of lifelong learning and professional development' the third most important competence to demonstrate at qualification. There is need for more provision of suitable programmes of study. The DIETS Network partners have begun to populate the website with Reusable Learning Objects (RLOs) and this offers a very good source of meeting some needs, particularly as it encourages the use of Information Technology and Communication Skills (ITC) which reduce the resources required to access LLL.





## SESSION 2: LEARNING FROM OTHERS

Session 2 was chaired by Dr Clare Corish, Chair of the Dissemination Group of DIETS and the Dublin Institute of Technology and included four interesting presentations.

Professor Maria Hassapidou from the Technological Education Institute in Thessaloniki, Greece spoke about the importance of LLL in meeting the needs of dietitians in Europe in a fast changing environment where dietitians have to develop new interests and expand their skills and capabilities. Lifelong education is an ongoing process of expanding knowledge and skills beyond the level of basic education. It is critical for personal and professional development and the success of dietetics practitioners. Today's technology helps dietitians to benefit from LLL through access to information, through which they can acquire new skills and education and change their professional practice in a fast changing environment. The need to develop a personal lifelong learning plan, should be directed by a personal desire to stay up-to-date and prepare for the future in one's discipline. Practical issues driving the need for LLL as well as strategies to achieve such learning need to be addressed by those who seek to create fluid, flexible LLL plans. Universities must be supportive of the development and promotion of LLL. Several advanced academic programmes already exist at masters and doctoral levels but Dietitians must first ask themselves......what are the skills that might be added to our professional background that would make us more valuable to the emerging healthcare systems?

Pieter Lievens and Karin Van Ael from Kempen University College in Belgium then spoke on 'International Social Work, Opportunities for Dietitians'. The presentation provided two examples of good practice of dietitians working with social workers. One was with teachers who undertook a joint research-project about developing minimal standards of living in regard to nutrition. The role of the dietitian was to compose a minimal healthy 'food basket' and develop the justification for its composition. Another example was with students who organised a cooking workshop for underprivileged people taking into account 'smart' and budget friendly shopping and easy to prepare menus with simple ingredients.

Rhonda Smith from the EURRECA project (http://www.eurreca.org) then described how dietitians can work and learn from other European projects using the example of EURRECA and giving delegates an excellent overview of the EURECCA project. This is an EC funded Framework 6 project with 34 partners from 17 European countries whose overall purpose is to support the drive towards harmonisation of micronutrient recommendations across Europe.

The final presentation by Tracey Parkin, from the University of Plymouth was particularly significant for all engaged in dietetic practice. Tracey described her study which explored patient and dietitian immediate recall of decisions made in a dietetic consultation. Eight-four consultations between dietitians and patients in outpatient diabetes services were audio-taped. Immediately after the consultation, patients and dietitians independently recorded the decisions made. These were then compared with those extracted from the audio tapes. The audiotapes revealed a mean of 3.74 (SD 1.79, range 0-8) decisions per consultation. A lower numbers of decisions was recalled from the consultations by patients (mean 2.19 SD 1.17, range 0-5) and dietitians (mean 2.98 SD 1.22, range 1-6). Recall agreement between patients and dietitians was 43%. Analysis of audiotapes and questionnaires highlighted decisions being recalled that were not made in the consultation. This may have implications for what is recorded in medical and dietetics notes, and for patient progress.





### SESSION 3:

# DIETITIANS WORKING ACROSS BOUNDARIES: IMPACT ON STUDENT PRE-REGISTRATION EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING NEEDS

Session 3 was chaired by Ana Caterina Moreira, from the DIETS Dissemination and Network Management Groups and the Higher School of Health Technology of Lisbon.

The first speaker was Laura Smillie, Communications Manager at EUFIC, the European Food Information Council who spoke about 'Stakeholder relations – how to get the right message to the right audience. As the role of the dietitian is perceived differently in different European countries, identification and prioritisation of key target audiences and message development are vital components in how dietitians can influence the perception of their profession. The need for an communication action plan, tailoring messages at national level, knowing that a maximum of 3 messages can be communicated at one time and strengthening national collaborations are worthwhile communication strategies. Finally, Laura advised that having less money does not mean communicating less effectively but that Dietitians need to be clever and use the resources available to them efficiently.

The second presentation was from Professor Ray Jones and was made via a live webcast link from Plymouth, UK. This presentation highlighted the power of this technology in making access to LLL easier. Professor Jones spoke about using the Internet for professional and patient communication. The Internet can provide health information, e.g. tailored interventions for dietary change but also person-person support through social networks, message boards, chat rooms, and virtual worlds. Professor Jones described a small study in which 19 dietetics lecturers, placement tutors and dietetics students participated in live webcasts discussing the advantages and disadvantages of synchronous (webcasts) with asynchronous (discussion forum) communication for placements. Some of the advantages of webcasting were thought to be (a) ability to have scheduled sessions so that students and academics could use the computer clusters in their institutions, (b) being 'forced' to do a task at a stated time without procrastination, (c) the interactivity. Asynchronous methods were thought better for being able to answer in your own time. In Plymouth, live interactive webcasting for presentations and for student education has been used for several years. It has helped generate a sense of 'presence' for distant students and for local students helps reduce travel time, money and carbon footprint. Barriers to its use include lack of bandwidth in some health service settings and the need for familiarisation and some support to get started. In communication between patients or between patients and professionals, some online methods offer anonymity e.g. in a study of a discussion forum for people who self harm, a small forum (~70 participants) in which the research team are participant observers and offer online support to members in crisis, members are able to express their views both about why and how they selfharm and their experience of the health services.

The third presentation was given by Professor Ruth Endacott, Chair of the Nursing and AHP Section, European Society of Intensive Care Medicine who spoke about multidisciplinary team working in healthcare delivery. The development of an effective team requires considerable investment. Professor Endacott discussed the complementary and competing agendas, attitudes and expectations of MDT members, as well as the ethical perspectives of MDT working and the challenges these bring to effective MDT working.

An optional seminar was given by Dr Stefan Storcksdieck, EUFIC Nutrition Communications Manager. EUFIC has launched a new section on its website dedicated to explaining energy balance through the provision of supportive energy balance information and personalised interactive tools. Created with the assistance of recognised nutrition and physical activity experts, it can be accessed at <a href="http://www.eufic.org/page/en/page/energy-balance/">http://www.eufic.org/page/en/page/energy-balance/</a>





#### SESSION 4:

# THE ROLE OF THE DIETS NETWORK IN SUPPORTING LIFE LONG LEARNING – NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE

Session 4 was chaired by Ellen Govers, from the DIETS Education and Network Management Groups and included five presentations.

The first speaker was Dr Mirjam Jager from the DIETS Education and Practice Group and HAN University, The Netherlands, who spoke about Dietitians learning from each other through visiting other dietitians.

During 2007-2009, 45 HEIs across Europe participated in an actual (face-to-face) visit with 10 virtual visits organised. Eight students in 2 HEIs met virtually to discuss several topics. The purpose of the *actual* visits was to encourage networking and to share knowledge, skills and experience amongst educators, dietetic practitioners and students of dietetics in different European countries. The purpose of the *virtual* visits was to experiment with new technologies, to evaluate their use by dietitians and HEIs and to develop shared educational resources. The visits helped dietitian to learn from each other and faciliated changes which are now being observed. There is increased use of new ICT technologies and reports are being written on dietetics education in different countries providing a valuable resource moving forwards.

However, many challenges remain e.g. the EFAD benchmark for practice placement is not yet met in some countries and there are differences in student assessment methods. Use of new ICT technologies is also a challenge with many dietitians and academic staff inexperienced in such technologies and requiring familiarisation time.

Professor Sandra Capra, Professor of Nutrition, University of Queensland, Australia and Chair, Board of Directors, ICDA was thought-provoking via a live internet link on the topic of 'The Global Village of Dietetics: Educators as Change Agents in International Dietetics'. This live internet link made the audience feel Sandra was actually present until the Australian dust storm destroyed our illusion!!

An aspiration for dietetics internationally is to enhance networking and practice around the world. The work that has been undertaken within Europe makes a significant contribution to this, bringing more commonality within a diverse language and practice group. The next step is to develop ways that this diversity can be transferred across borders in ways that enrich the profession and bring benefit to all parties. To do this, there needs to be acceptance of diversity and difference as well as broader understanding of dietetics as a profession. While the ICDA has a very broad definition of practice and tries to be inclusive rather than exclusive, at national levels this becomes more difficult. Educators must meet the imperatives of their universities and of the national associations and accrediting agencies. To develop exchange programmes and to form international interest groups is helpful. These can serve to break down barriers and can improve standards by facilitating learning from each other. This collective sharing of knowledge and wisdom will work across borders and is more feasible in the electronic age in which we find ourselves. As educators, we need to develop a willingness to share and to extend curricula beyond the 'minimum' needed for local practice.

Ultimately, one goal for the ICDA might be to develop international minimum curricula standards. In the meantime, we need to see the strengths in the various models of practice and education for dietetics and look outwards. Part of the ICDA strategic plan is to strengthen networks more strongly. Forming an international dietetic educators group within the ICDA framework might be useful. Forming cross border collaborations to undertake research in dietetics education would be an excellent step. The DIETS programme is an outstanding example of how to enhance this sharing and how to cross borders and has much to teach others in this respect.





Karin Hådell, the Honorary President of EFAD then spoke on 'How Dietitians working in a multidisciplinary way supports understanding across Europe'. The dietetics profession applies evidence based dietetic practice to individuals and groups in health and disease. However, dietetics/ nutrition and health promotion are multifaceted subjects which call for multidisciplinary approaches. To raise awareness and to support understanding of the importance of good nutrition, dietitians need to collaborate with other professionals as individual dietitians, as national dietetic associations and at European level. EFAD is an important partner in multidisciplinary projects at European level. These include projects on early nutrition programming, prevention of diabetes and obesity and malnutrition. In these projects, Dietitians work with a range of other professionals.

Dr Clare Corish then discussed whether DIETS has succeeded in bringing educators closer together? Europe is moving towards a European Higher Education Area which requires sustainable reform of higher education in Europe. The establishment of Thematic Networks to facilitate strategic reflection on the scientific, educational and institutional issues within higher education is one major innovation of the Socrates-Erasmus programme. Cooperation within Thematic Networks should enhance quality and develop a European dimension within a given academic discipline leading to outcomes which have a lasting and widespread impact across Europe in the field concerned.

The DIETS Thematic Network has mapped dietetics education, training and practice throughout Europe using web-based questionnaires. During 2007-2009, actual (face-to-face) and virtual visits were organised between dietetics educators from HEIs and practice placement settings, and between students across Europe. Quality indicators for practical dietetics education were developed. Educational resources were made available through the DIETS website, for example, teaching and assessment methods, and reusable learning objects. Follow-up virtual meetings and web-based questionnaires allowed an evaluation of changes made to educational practice and an appraisal of the technologies HEIs and dietitians use for communication. European dietetic competences have been agreed and performance indicators published. The visits and conferences allowed dietetic educators from across Europe to meet face-to-face, facilitating virtual communication in the intervening periods, leading to fresh thinking, changes in educational techniques in all settings, and to student and staff mobility across Europe. Information was widely disseminated among HEIs and dietetic associations through the DIETS website, seven newsletters and three conferences during the three year period through the use of 'key contacts' who played a pivotal role in dissemination activities.

Finally, Professor de Looy explained how Dietitians can ensure education, teaching and professional standards through life long learning, as proposed in the DIETS2 project. As dietitians in Europe, it is 'our responsibility to improve the impact of our profession by bringing a quality assured and evidenced approach to supporting our dietetic community and those with whom we work; colleagues, clients and the public and private sectors'. The DIETS Network is working to improve the understanding of the dietetic competency statements and their performance indicators. The embedding of this initiative will define professional competences at the point of qualification as a dietitians working in Europe. These competences will influence dietetic training, provide a benchmark for lifelong learning and ultimately the European registration of dietitians. The quality of the European dietetic workforce and especially its 'fitness to practice' is a critical component of the Edinburgh (2005) and Portugal (2007) Agreements. The TN DIETS has promoted the 'Exchange of Good Practice' (Agreement Seven of the Edinburgh Agreement) by professional dietetic associations. This exchange will contribute to the 'Competence Assurance of European Health Care Professional' (Portugal Agreement, 2007) enabling exchange of a competent and well informed professional across borders. Everything we do within the TN DIETS should be thought of as peer learning within the context of creating the 'knowledge triangle'; a strong collaboration between education, research and innovation with learning regions centred on HEIs. The proposals for a new direction for the DIETS Network involve the professional development of dietitians, quality assurance in dietetic practice, education for safe and effective practice and dietetic research and evidence based practice.





#### SPECIALIST SEMINARS AT THE THIRD DIETS CONFERENCE

This year at the DIETS 3 conference, we were treated to some exceptionally good seminars from experts in their fields.

The Conference pioneered the use of IT for the participants. Two presentations to the main auditorium and one seminar were hosted at distance. Professor Ray Jones, Professor of Health Informatics at the University of Plymouth held a seminar for 25 people in the IT suite at Lisbon. He demonstrated how the use of web-casting can not only be used for speaking to a large group each sitting at their own PC, but also how it is possible to divide the large group into small working parties to address a particular question topic, all from his studio in Plymouth, UK. Dietitians in the small groups solved problems and then rejoined the whole group to share their experiences. The use of this technology makes teaching and learning available remotely, connecting up individual dietitians across Europe, and is also is very environmentally friendly, saving travel time and resources.

Other seminars followed themes of how dietitians can engage more in multiprofessional working, multicultural working and working more with Social Workers. Each seminar had a specific focus but all were asked to consider how student dietitians could be introduced to the subject, assessed for their learning and to identify any competence which was of particular value. The seminars were also asked the identify how the Higher Education Institutes could work more closely with the Practice Placement Educators to ensure coherence and common thinking. All of the discussions and outcomes are summarised on the DIETS website (www.thematicnetworkdietetics.eu).

Finally two seminars addressed the area of Life Long Learning and design of portfolios and how to engage in dietetics research. These two seminars were popular and colleagues found them to be of particular value as both areas are key to the continued professionalisation of dietetics practice in Europe. A lively debate on the definition of dietetic research as opposed to nutrition research was a key feature of this seminar. You can read more on the website!

Overall the specialists and the seminar participants had very good debates and left the conference thinking more about the topics and, above all, how dietitians can become more engaged in using the information to promote the profession in Europe.

Professor Anne de Looy, University of Plymouth, UK.









#### ALMOND DIGESTION: NUTRIENT RELEASE AND GUT HEALTH

The Guest Lecture was given by Dr Giusy Mandalari from the Institute of Food Research, Norwich, UK and was sponsored by the Almond Board of California. It provided an excellent overview of the potential role of almonds in improving human health.

Dr Mandalari began her presentation by explaining how a dynamic stomach model can be used to investigate the bioaccessibility of nutrients. Bioaccessibility is defined as the proportion of the nutrient that can be released from a complex food matrix and therefore becomes potentially available for absorption in the gastro-intestinal tract.

Investigation of the release of nutrients from almonds demonstrates that limited amounts of nutrients are released from almonds during digestion. The majority of almond nutrients remain within the tissue after gastric and small intestinal digestion and, therefore, are available for colonic fermentation. This has implications for body weight/satiety.

Despite this, it appears that antioxidants present in almond skins are available for absorption in the gut. Almonds may, therefore, have a role in reducing risk factors for chronic inflammatory diseases and ageing disorders. In addition, finely ground almonds have shown potential prebiotic effects, increasing the growth of beneficial bacteria in the colon. Prebiotics have been reported to indirectly lead to a reduction in serum triglyceride levels. They may also affect mineral absorption in the large bowel and there is some evidence to show they may have beneficial effects against inflammatory bowel diseases.

Dr Mandalari concluded her presentation by stating that there is strong evidence that incorporation of almonds into a food results in added health functionality.





#### **ACHIEVEMENTS**

**Dr Stojan Kostanjevec** from the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, attained his PhD on the 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2009. Many of you know Stojan from his involvement in DIETS through the Network Management Group. His 'treat' to himself on completion of his PhD was to compete in the New York marathon which he completed in an excellent time of 3 hours and 14 minutes. All involved with DIETS send Stojan congratulations on both achievements. Also, Stojan deserves commendation on his time management skills which allowed him to complete a PhD, train for the marathon, actively participate in DIETS (the June meeting of the working group members was held in Ljubljana and hosted by Stojan), maintain his post as a lecturer in the Education Faculty of the University of Ljubljana, head up dietetics in Slovenia and look after his young family.

A short abstract of his doctoral dissertation is described below.

#### Impact of formal education on the dietary habits of children and their nutrition knowledge

The focus of the dissertation was an analysis of the impact of formal nutrition education on the dietary habits and nutrition knowledge of 6th graders of nine-year elementary school children and the role of home economics courses. The purpose of the research was to determine the level of nutrition knowledge and analyse the dietary habits of children at the beginning and at the end of the school year. The research included 28 home economics teachers and 630 6th graders of nine-year elementary schools in Slovenia who attended home economics courses in 2006/2007 and received formal education about nutrition. Student nutrition knowledge was assessed by a written test given at the beginning and at the end of the course on nutrition. Nutritional habits of children were analysed on the basis of frequency of taking daily meals and food products. We also studied the opinions and attitudes of children related to healthy diets. The results of the research showed that nutrition education has effects on children's knowledge. No statistically significant differences in the knowledge between boys and girls were found. Nutritional education did not significantly influence dietary habits of children or change their opinions and attitudes towards healthy nutrition. It was demonstrated that there are differences between the genders and that nutritional education has impacts on dietary habits of eleven-year olds: according to our research, girls develop healthier dietary habits and children with better nutrition knowledge also eat healthier than children with poor nutrition knowledge.

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