

Joint Position Statement on the Credentialing and Scope of Practice for Dietitians and Nutritionists in Hong Kong

Developed by

the “Taskforce for Local Dietitians Registration” which comprises representatives of the Hong Kong Dietitians Association (HKDA), Hong Kong Nutrition Association (HKNA) and Hong Kong Practising Dietitians Union (HKPDU)

This joint position statement developed by the “Taskforce for Local Dietitians Registration” (“Taskforce”) is intended to explain the Credentialing and Scope of Practice for Dietitians and Nutritionists in Hong Kong, and to assist the public seeking accurate and evidence-based nutrition advice from qualified professionals.

Introduction

In recent years, the Hong Kong public has become increasingly health conscious and often actively seeks professional nutrition advice for supporting better health as well as preventing and managing various disease conditions such as cardiovascular disease, hypertension, diabetes and obesity.

Credentialing and Scope of Practice for Dietitians (營養師) and Nutritionists (營養學家)

It has been brought to our attention that the public is experiencing difficulties in differentiating between the title, credentials and scope of practice of Dietitians (營養師) and Nutritionists (營養學家). The Taskforce is in agreement that Dietitians and Nutritionists in Hong Kong should hold the following educational qualifications to ensure they possess the appropriate level of knowledge, skills and competencies to practice in the respective professions:

Education, Qualification and Local Memberships	
Dietitians (營養師)	Nutritionists (營養學家)
Must hold a university degree (baccalaureate, master, post-graduate diploma or doctoral) from a recognized University*in dietetics which includes supervised dietetics training (i.e. dietetic placement) in various settings including but not limited to hospital, community and food service Qualified dietitians who practice in Hong Kong are strongly recommended to obtain membership and fulfill the continuing education requirements of HKDA, HKNA and/or HKPDU.	Must hold a university degree (baccalaureate, master, post graduate diploma or doctoral) majoring in nutritional sciences or food and nutrition. Qualified nutritionists who practice in Hong Kong are strongly recommended to obtain membership and fulfill the continuing education requirements of HKNA.
Scope of Practice	
Dietitians are clinically trained to provide individualized medical nutrition therapy which includes nutritional diagnosis, designing	Nutritionists have knowledge of food and nutritional science and may provide nutrition services focusing on health promotion,

<p>individualized meals plans, providing nutritional counselling and recommending nutritional supplements when appropriate. Dietitians are qualified to provide nutrition services to both the healthy as well as those with chronic illnesses.</p>	<p>consultancy to food industry or conduct nutritional research but excluding individual or group counseling on medical nutrition therapy.</p>
<p>Dietitians work in areas including public and private hospitals, private practice, community health centers, food industry and catering services, elderly homes, educational and training institutes and nutrition research etc.</p>	<p>Nutritionists work in areas including public health and community health sector, food and nutrition industry and tertiary education.</p>

* Recognized Universities are those with dietetics programmes accredited or recognized by the Health & Care Professions Council of the United Kingdom; or the Commission on Dietetic Registration of the United States of America; or Provincial Dietetic Registration Bodies in Canada; or Dietitians Association of Australia.

Inappropriate use of Dietitian (營養師) or Nutritionist (營養學家) titles and/or the provision of services outside the relevant scope of practice by unqualified individuals is misleading and may be harmful to the public. Medical nutrition therapy provided by unqualified individuals may result in inappropriate treatment being given, potentially resulting in short-term or even permanent health damages or delayed treatments.

Urge for Immediate Regulation for Dietitians (營養師) and Nutritionists (營養學家)

The Taskforce holds the view that both Dietitians (營養師) and Nutritionists (營養學家) have important and distinctive roles and are able to contribute to the health of Hong Kong people. The Taskforce strongly supports that both Dietitians and Nutritionists shall be regulated under a comprehensive system with clearly defined educational requirement, qualification, scope of practice and code of ethics. The system shall give clear guidance for the public to identify qualified Dietitians and Nutritionists for specific services and evidence-base nutrition information. The ultimate goal for regulating both professions is to protect the public from receiving misleading information which may pose risks to their health.

The dietetic profession has been proactively working towards gaining regulation for their profession for many years. The Taskforce has been working very closely with the Food and Health Bureau and Chinese University of Hong Kong Jockey Club School of Public Health and Primary Health Care since 2013 on the Accredited Register (AR) Scheme for health professionals which are currently not regulated under Statutory Registration. In addition to the regulation of Dietitians, HKNA will work closely with the teaching staffs of local universities and government to prepare the accreditation and regulation for Nutritionists.

Background of three recognized Dietitian and Nutritionist Associations in Hong Kong

Hong Kong Dietitians Association (HKDA) - 香港營養師協會

HKDA is a professional organization of Dietitians in Hong Kong which was incorporated in 2001. HKDA is the sole member of the International Confederation of Dietetic Association (ICDA). Its mission is to associate and unite its members in the promotion of high standards of professional

dietetic practice and optimal nutrition health for people of Hong Kong. Our members are all qualified Dietitians representing the majority of Dietitians in Hong Kong. In order to maintain and enhance professional competency, all of its members must obtain a university degree (baccalaureate, master, post-graduate diploma or doctoral) in dietetics with supervised dietetics training as well as meeting the annual Continuing Dietetic Education (CDE) requirement to attain the registered title of “Accredited Dietitian” granted by HKDA. For further information on the HKDA and its activities, please visit: <http://www.hkda.com.hk>.

Hong Kong Nutrition Association (HKNA) - 香港營養學會

Hong Kong Nutrition Association is a society of nutrition professionals incorporated in Hong Kong since 1980. HKNA is the sole member of the International Union of Nutritional Sciences (IUNS). Full members are qualified Dietitians and Nutritionists recognized by the Association. Associate members are those with a degree or diploma in food science, catering management, home economics or medicine. HKNA is also open to students enrolled in a dietetic / nutrition programs in accredited institutions. For further information about HKNA, please visit: www.hkna.org.hk.

Hong Kong Practising Dietitians Union (HKPDU) - 香港執業營養師公會

HKPDU was established in 2001. It is responsible for protecting the welfare of Dietitians and advocating for local statutory registration for Dietitians. To learn more about HKPDU, please visit: <http://www.hkpdu.org>.

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