Macedonian Pharmaceutical Bulletin, 72 (Suppl 1) 393 - 394 (2026)
Online ISSN: 1857-8969
DOI: 10.33320/maced.pharm.bull.2026.72.03.190
Short communication

The role of dietitian in modern healthcare: Comparison between developed countries and R. North Macedonia

Bojana Janeku[1,2*], Lidija Petrushevska-Tozi[2]

[1]*Nutri Balans, Nikola Tesla 22/14, Skopje, 1000, R. North Macedonia,*
[2]*Faculty of Pharmacy, Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje, Mother Theresa 47, 1000 Skopje, R. North Macedonia*

Introduction

Modern dietetics is an evidence-based healthcare profession that integrates nutrition science, medical sciences, and clinical practice to promote health, prevent disease, and support treatment outcomes. In developed healthcare systems, dietitians are recognized healthcare professionals and essential members of multidisciplinary teams involved in patient care. (Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, 2021; EFAD 2016; ICDA 2014). Numerous studies have demonstrated that nutritional therapy and dietetic counseling contribute to improved clinical outcomes, reduced complications, shorter hospital stays, and enhanced quality of life among patients with chronic and acute diseases. As the prevalence of non-communicable diseases such as obesity, diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular diseases, and cancer continues to rise globally, the role of dietitians has become increasingly important. While many countries have successfully integrated dietetics into their healthcare systems through professional regulation and institutional recognition, the profession remains insufficiently developed in the Republic of North Macedonia.

The aim of this paper is to present the status of dietetics in North Macedonia through comparison with selected countries where the profession is well established and to identify opportunities for future development and integration.

Materials and methods

A comprehensive literature review was conducted using scientific publications, legislative documents, official reports, and information obtained from professional dietetic organizations. The analysis included healthcare systems and regulatory frameworks from the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Croatia. Attention was given to educational requirements, professional registration, licensing procedures, scope of practice, employment opportunities, and the position of dietitians within healthcare systems (Worsfold et al., 2015). The findings were compared with the current situation in the Republic of North Macedonia to identify gaps and potential areas for improvement.

Results and discussion

The analysis revealed that countries with well-developed healthcare systems recognize dietitians as regulated healthcare professionals with clearly defined competencies and responsibilities. In both the United States and the United Kingdom, dietitians are required to complete accredited academic programs, supervised clinical training, and

*bojana.srbljak@gmail.com

professional registration or licensure before entering practice. Dietitians in these countries provide medical nutrition therapy, participate in disease prevention programs, conduct patient education, and contribute to public health initiatives. Their services are integrated into hospitals, primary healthcare facilities, community health programs, educational institutions, and research centers. Furthermore, professional organizations play a critical role in establishing educational standards, promoting continuing professional development, and advocating for the profession. Evidence indicates that integrating dietitians into multidisciplinary healthcare teams improves patient outcomes and reduces healthcare costs, particularly in the management of chronic diseases and malnutrition (Bruening et al., 2015; Hickson, 2017; Sahyoun et al., 2004). Clinical dietitians are actively involved in nutrition assessment, diagnosis, intervention, monitoring, and evaluation, ensuring that nutritional care is incorporated into patient treatment plans.

In contrast, the Republic of North Macedonia has not yet fully integrated dietetics into its healthcare system. Despite growing awareness of the role of nutrition in health promotion and disease prevention, the dietetics profession continues to lack comprehensive legal regulation and institutional recognition. There is currently no standardized system for registration, licensing, or employment of dietitians within healthcare institutions. Consequently, access to evidence-based nutritional care remains limited, and nutrition-related services are often provided without clear professional standards. In contrast, the experiences of countries with established dietetic professions demonstrate that the development of educational standards, professional regulation, and healthcare integration are fundamental prerequisites for advancing nutritional care and improving public health outcomes. The importance of regulation is consistent with European recommendations (EFAD, 2016; Worsfold et al., 2015).

Conclusion

Dietetics is a vital component of modern healthcare systems and plays a significant role in health promotion, disease prevention, and clinical treatment. International experience demonstrates that legal recognition, professional regulation, and integration of dietitians into healthcare teams contribute substantially to improved patient outcomes and more efficient healthcare delivery. (WHO, 2023; Hickson, 2017).

The Republic of North Macedonia has considerable potential to strengthen its healthcare system through the formal recognition and implementation of dietetics as a healthcare profession. Legal recognition, professional regulation, and healthcare integration of dietitians are essential for advancing evidence-based nutrition and improving health outcomes.

References

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, 2021. Definition of Terms List. Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Chicago, IL. https://www.eatrightpro.org/practice/scope-and-standards-of-practice/definition-of-terms

Bruening, M. et al., 2015. Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: Standards of Practice and Standards of Professional Performance for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists in public health and community nutrition. J. Acad. Nutr. Diet. 115, 1699–1709.e39. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jand.2015.06.374

EFAD Brussels 2016. Definition of a dietitian and professional standards https://www.efad.org/definition-of-a-dietitian/

Hickson, M., 2017. Dietitians and their future role in healthcare. J. Hum. Nutr. Diet. 30, 429–430. https://doi.org/10.1111/jhn.12476

International Confederation of Dietetic Associations, 2014. International Competency Standards for Dietitian-Nutritionists. International Confederation of Dietetic Associations, Toronto. https://internationaldietetics.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/International-Competency-Standards-for-Dietitian-Nutritionists.pdf

Sahyoun, N.R. et al., 2004. Evaluation of nutrition education interventions for older adults: a proposed framework. J. Am. Diet. Assoc. 104, 58–69. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jada.2003.10.013

World Health Organization, 2023. Healthy diet. World Health Organization, Geneva. https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/healthy-diet

Worsfold, L. et al., 2015. Professional regulation of dietitians and nutritionists: a review of current practice. Nutr. Diet. 72, 193–202. https://doi.org/10.1111/1747-0080.12163