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## Celebrating Dietitians Week – The Role of the Dietitian in Aged Care

By OSCAR Care Group Dietitian Lauren Goffredo

Dietitians Day, 26 March 2021

### Celebrating Extraordinary Dietitians



It is popular opinion throughout society that Dietitians are “the food police”. Going out for a meal with family and friends or attending social events can have people telling us “oh don’t look at what I am eating” or “I feel guilty eating this in front of you” while they are chowing down a piece of their own birthday cake. However just like you, Dietitians are real people! Diet and nutrition is a fine balancing act, if you know any Dietitians who tell you they don’t indulge in a little chocolate or ice –cream every so often, it’s probably a façade.

As a Dietitian, we often get stereotyped into being advocates for weight loss and dieting and yes – this is definitely part of our job! But what people often oversee is that our role in the health care setting is more diverse than knowing everything about the latest fad diet.

**To celebrate Dietitians Week 2021, we want to share with you the insight of the day-to-day role of a Dietitian, how we can be used to advocate for better patient care, particularly in the Aged Care sector.**

#### The Role of a Dietitian

In a world where every celebrity, social media influencer & even your neighbour thinks they are nutrition experts, many people are confused as to what Dietitians do. Why listen to a Dietitian when Mary at school pick up says that you should not eat carbohydrates because they make you fat, or you saw that model on the front cover of the magazine who swears she lost 30 kilos on the paleo diet? Many people take the advice from celebrities or Instagram influencers over a university-qualified health professional who practices & advises their clients based on years & years of **high quality, evidenced based research**.

Accredited Practicing Dietitians (APDs) are the only nutrition body recognised in Australia by the Australian government & health care sector, bound by professional conduct & ethics to provide nutrition support & advice to individuals of all ages. Dietitians have completed numerous years of university studies whereby we are trained extensively within various sectors including hospitals. **Dietitians provide medical nutrition therapy for a range of health conditions including cancer, kidney disease, intensive care, heart disease, diabetes & enteral nutrition.**

We work in the **clinical setting**, providing acute care to patients in hospitals, Aged Care and private practice on a range of complex medical conditions ranging from malnutrition, heart disease, cancer & diabetes.

We work behind the scenes in **food production**, food manufacturing & food preparation businesses to nutritionally assess new food products, meals or menus to ensure they meet Australian nutrition guidelines and standards.

There are Dietitians who ensure athletes have the right fuel to keep on running and some that help premature babies grow.

# Ways in which OSCAR Dietitians can support your Aged Care residents

At OSCAR, our team of APDs work tirelessly to provide dietetic services to Aged Care facilities across Australia. It is our passion to work with residents, families, staff, carers & chefs/food service personnel to provide resident-centred nutrition support to ensure their needs & goals are met.

Contrary to popular opinion, clinical Dietitians who work in hospitals, rehabilitation or Aged Care hardly ever work to promote weight loss.

Our roles are focused on ways in which we can maintain or promote weight gain due to the prevalence of malnutrition in the sick & elderly populations. Whether we are recommending a high-energy high-protein diet to a resident needing a little nutritional boost, tailoring and prescribing oral nutrition supplements or working with care and kitchen staff to educate on the importance of food fortification to make every mouthful count, there is always an important place for us in the resident's care.



## Referrals

Despite the importance of healthy weight management & malnutrition within the elderly, there are other indications for Dietitian input.

Referrals are warranted to assist in the management of numerous acute and chronic diseases including;

- Nausea or vomiting
- Bowel troubles (such as constipation or diarrhoea)
- Inflammatory bowel disease
- Chronic kidney disease
- Liver failure
- Cancer
- Diabetes management

## Wound management

Dietitians also play a vital role in wound management and can tailor nutrition care plans to see the advanced healing of pressure injuries and slow-healing wounds and work closely with Speech Pathologists to ensure a resident's diet is safe if they have impaired swallowing abilities.

## Nutrition for the elderly

Dietitians are also able to devise enteral feeding regimes (including PEG feeds) and can interpret a resident's blood tests to highlight potential nutrition concerns. We also offer education and training programs for facility staff on various nutrition and hydration topics as well as menu development and reviews to ensure residents are receiving not only delicious, but nutritious meals.

**It is not only our duty to ensure all our recommendations, advice and education are based on evidence and best practice guidelines, but our desire to ensure that the focal point of our care is to advocate for good nutrition, promote quality of life and longevity, respect and support the choices and goals of our residents and their families.**



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## Why we love being Dietitians!



Like medical professionals, Dietitians undergo ongoing professional development, training & reflection to ensure their knowledge is up-to-date & their practice is safe. When working in Aged Care it is the joy of being able to call yourself a resident's Dietitian.

One benefit of being a Dietitian in Aged Care is that we have the time to sit down with residents & discuss their nutrition goals, food preferences, likes & dislikes to ensure their nutrition care plan is individualised to suit them. Most importantly, time to create and develop special bonds with the residents, often popping in to visit them when we are nearby just for a good chat as we know it truly makes their day special.

**There is no better feeling than going to work & seeing a resident in your care improve & achieve a better quality of life, that is why we love being Dietitians!**

**This Dietitians Day (26th March 2021), OSCAR Care Group would like to celebrate and give thanks to all the wonderful Dietitians out there, in Australia and abroad.**

**We particularly highlight the outstanding work of our OSCAR Dietetics team for continually going above and beyond to improve and better the community, no matter their health status.**



### Do you need Dietetic support for someone you care for?

This article was written by **OSCAR** Care Group Dietitian Lauren Goffredo. Please call or email our Dietetics Team via the contact details below.



**DIETETICS**

### References

[Why Choose an Accredited Practising Dietitian?](#)  
Dietitians Australia

### Quality Standards

[Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission](#)

[Royal Commission Aged-CareMar2019](#)  
Dietitians Australia

## What Dietitians Do...



What my FRIENDS think I do



What SOCIETY thinks I do



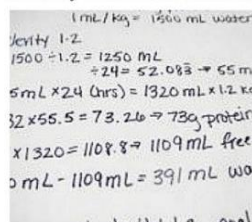
What my PATIENTS think I do



What DOCTORS think I do



What I think I do



What I ACTUALLY do



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