

Discuss the role of nutritionists, dieticians, nutritional therapists and other professionals who offer dietary advice in the UK.

In today's society there is a huge demand for nutritional advice due to the increase of people being overweight or obese, as according to the health survey for England in 2017, the national statistics state that 64% of adults were overweight or obese and its increasingly rising. Though 60% of people trust nutrition advice from under qualified professionals and state they would only trust advice given to them by their personal trainer or fitness instructor. (BDA,2017).

Qualifications achieved by personal trainers may vary from a day course, part-time diploma or a few weeks online course. These qualifications may interlink with those of nutritional therapists and diet experts. Those who take foundation courses can be registered with the complimentary and natural healthcare council (Thomas,2018). The council was set up by the government as a protection to the public who may see a therapist. Unsatisfied patients can contact the council if they have any concerns or complaints they wish to voice (CNHC). The CNHC describes nutritional therapists as "practitioners who use a wide range of tools to assess and identify potential nutritional imbalances and understand how these may contribute to and individual's symptoms and health concerns". Anyone can call themselves a nutritional therapist as there is no governing body protecting the title, they normally work on their own setting up private business giving advice on dosage of vitamins, detox and food intolerance, a lot of their information is based on personal opinion and they are allowed to sell supplements they have advised to patients (BDA). The British Association for applied nutrition and nutritional therapy (BANT) is a company and another professional association for nutrition therapists, they claim that "Nutritional therapists are uniquely trained to understand how nutrient, other foods and lifestyle factors influence the function of the body by considering biochemical individuality in a patient centred manner".

Nutritionists work in a different role to nutritional therapists which may include public health, education, media, government research, sport or the NHS. They provide scientific evidence-based information and guidance about the impacts of food and nutrition on the health and wellbeing of individuals and the public to try and prevent disease not about special diets for medical conditions as they are unable to work with patients requiring therapeutic interventions without the supervision from a dietician (Thomas, 2018 and BDA). As MacDonell (2009, p.20-22) states, "small changes to clients' food and fluid intake can result in significant improvement in wellbeing". Nutritionists must have at least a BSc degree in nutrition, there are different courses which come out with the same qualification but all must be met by the criteria standards of professional education in nutrition and accredited by the association for nutrition, these courses have a direct entry onto the voluntary register however this is not a legal requirement (BDA and Thomas). The title of a nutritionist is not protected by statute however are governed by the association for nutrition. To become a registered Nutritionist you must present a portfolio demonstrating your practice of experience for three years prior to your degree, all must continue professional development (AFN, 2018). You can check the registration of your nutritionist via the association for nutrition website, this is a registered charity to protect and benefit the public.

whereas Dietitians often work in the NHS as a band 5 dietitian or health promotion officer using their knowledge of nutritional science to manage and treat medical conditions such as food allergies, IBS, chronic fatigue, malnutrition and eating disorders (Thomas,2018). They promote good health by helping facilitate a positive change in food choice, influencing food and health policy across the spectrum (AFN,2018). One of their most important roles is to work with other health care professionals and social care workers to educate them to promote health and reduce nutritional related diseases and to achieve the best course of action for a patient (BDA). Most patients who will see a dietitian would be referred by another health care professional such as a doctor, or health visitor. They are the only nutritional professional to be regulated by law the title dietitian is protected, they must be registered with the health and care professional's council to describe themselves as a dietitian (BDA). Dietitians must have an undergraduate dietetic degree consisting of 3 to 4 years, some may then go on to gain more qualifications in their specialist areas which may include paediatrics, sports or research. They are also legally able to prescribe, administer and adjust prescription only medicines such as insulin and phosphate binders however or not able to offer any advice where they would benefit from personal finance (BDA). The British dietetic association is the professional association and trade union for dietitians, it is aimed to inform, protect, support and represent their members (AFN,2018).

Overall depending on your dietary and nutritional advice you seek depends on whom you should seek advice from. Some information given from each professional may be similar as their basic knowledge they have should be along the same lines. Dietitians are more clinical based and are the people you need to be under if you are hospitalised or have an illness that is linked to nutrition. Nutritionists are more for those who seek to prevent nutritional linked diseases or for those in sport to enhance performance. Nutritional therapists may be for clients who seek general advice whom are fit and healthy and continue to be but would like to gain knowledge on nutrition or have minor nutritional problems. Although if you are not sure on the information given to you then you should always get a second opinion (Thomas,2018).

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