

## What Brokers Need to Know to Insure Dieticians

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Healthy living requires a commitment to training and growth, as new health challenges arise and society's health shifts over time. A case in point is a study including Canadian participants from earlier this year. It found dieticians may be among the first health professionals to recognize disordered eating and behavior, but their roles can be unclear outside of hospitals. Although dieticians are integral to the identification, treatment, and management of eating disorders (EDs), the uncertainty regarding their scope of practice affects their role in the treatment team. (1)

At MedThree, we customize our solutions to meet the needs of each healthcare discipline. We are proud to highlight dietitians as a regulated healthcare profession.

Dietitians specialize in identifying and treating disease-related malnutrition and conducting medical nutrition therapy, such as designing nasogastric feeding regimens. Only dietitians are licensed to assess, diagnose, and treat such health problems.

Keep reading to learn more about the unique role and risks of this essential healthcare profession.

### The Complex Role of Dieticians

Dietitians are a diverse and complex group in the healthcare sector. Dietitians may work in a clinic or a private practice to provide nutrition counselling to patients, helping them prevent and treat conditions such as diabetes and heart disease. Clinical dietitians may also deliver outpatient or public health and nutrition education programs and contribute to public policy.

Any healthcare profession should consider not just their individual roles and responsibilities, but also the clinical and other teams with which they may interact. Dietitians may work with physicians, physician assistants, physical therapists, occupational therapists, recreational therapists, pharmacists, speech therapists, social workers, nurses, dietetic technicians, psychologists, and other healthcare professionals to provide patients with care. Clinical dietitians may have dual responsibilities, including foodservice or research as well as patient nutrition therapy.

## **Dietitians are Registered Healthcare Professionals**

Dietitians are legally protected in Canada under the title of Registered Dietitian (RD). In order to use this title, dietitians must undergo extensive and rigorous training, both in the workplace and in university, as well as be registered with a dietetic regulatory body in the province where they practice.

As part of their job, clinical dietitians provide nutrition therapy to patients with a variety of health conditions and consult with patients and their families regarding diet. They may work in hospitals, outpatient clinics, nursing care facilities, and other health care facilities. As such, their advice draws on the latest scientific research to guide patients in making healthy lifestyle and dietary choices.

### **4 Most Common Liability Risks**

Working with patients or as part of a multidisciplinary team brings many liability risks for dietitians.

#### **1. Poor outcomes for patients:**

Dietitians are always at risk of being sued by their patients, whether it's because of a decline in health following the dietitian's services or simply because they haven't achieved the results they hoped for.

In some cases, clients may be able to file a malpractice lawsuit or claim the RDN's advice or failure to provide it caused them harm. Allegations include negligence, misrepresentation, failure to provide a service, breach of privacy, and more.

If a dietitian provides sound advice to a patient but he or she does not follow their instructions, the dietitian may be left vulnerable to lawsuits that could be financially devastating.

#### **2. A multi-professional team environment:**

Working in an advisory or consulting capacity opens the door to miscommunication, misunderstandings, perceived negligence, or harm.

#### **3. Errors:**

It is possible to recommend a diet plan well recommended by a significant amount of research and still have the patient get sick. It is also possible to mistakenly advise a patient to consume a product which contains peanuts, even if they listed it as an allergy on their intake form. Anaphylactic shock could lead to a lawsuit against the dietitian if the patient suffers it.

In addition, there is also the possibility of error when a dietitian makes medical decisions with a patient in a hospital. An intake error or misdiagnosis could lead to a costly lawsuit.

#### **4. Data protection and privacy:**

It is also risky to store client data. Patient records have been breached in some major cases in the past few years.

### **The MedThree Advantage**

With specialized experience in the healthcare industry, MedThree Insurance Group can help by providing tailored policies for the healthcare and life sciences industries. Our insurance coverage options make it easy for brokers to find the right policy for their clients in the healthcare and life science industry. Visit us at <https://medthreeinsurance.com/> to learn more about our healthcare insurance products.

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Sources:

1. <https://news.griffith.edu.au/2021/05/26/dietitians-want-more-training-to-help-those-with-eating-disorders/>