

February 2018

## **Application**

The purpose of this Code is to provide a set of standards for the ethical and professional behaviour expected of Registered Nutritionists towards consumers, society and the profession. All Nutritionists registered by the Nutrition Society of New Zealand are asked to subscribe to this Code and to account to the Society should their conduct be considered to breach any provisions of the Code.

## **General Purposes and Principles**

The quality of nutrition practice and science depends on the competence, values and the environment in which Registered Nutritionists work. Best practice flourishes when honesty, constructive criticism and communication are valued, and where adherence to the highest professional standards and ethics prevails.

This Code is not intended to cover every situation and it is anticipated that members will adapt the fundamental principles to the particular circumstances of their work. It is expected that members will adhere to ethical requirements placed on them by legislation, regulations, advisory committees, professional bodies and their employer.

A nutritionist is not regulated under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003. The Nutrition Society of New Zealand operates a voluntary registration system that registers nutritionists that meet specified academic and work experience criteria.

## **Functions of the Registration Panel**

The Registration Panel approves the registration and re-registration of Registered Nutritionists according to the rules of the Nutrition Society of New Zealand.

## **1. Integrity and Professionalism**

Registered Nutritionists shall:

- strive to conduct themselves in a manner that enhances the reputation of the profession;
- show respect, consideration and courtesy to clients, colleagues and the public;
- demonstrate integrity and professionalism in all aspects of their work and practice;
- be fair and unbiased in all aspects of their research and in their application of their knowledge;
- not compromise the welfare, health and safety of the community and the environment;
- act in accordance with the spirit of the Treaty of Waitangi and, particularly

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when that work includes investigations which impinge on the New Zealand natural environment, on individual persons and communities or on customs, objects or places of special cultural significance;

- avoid or declare real, or apparent, conflicts of interest.

## 2. Competence and Standards

Registered Nutritionists shall:

- represent themselves only in their fields of expertise or scope of practice as defined by the Registration Panel, formal qualifications and subsequent work experience;
- know the limits of their skills and knowledge and refrain from undertaking work in which they are not trained or competent;
- make optimum use of available resources;
- follow acceptable work practices;
- reflect on their own practice;
- apply good practice to record keeping in line with regulatory requirements and research protocols;
- not falsify results, records, qualifications or experience;
- maintain a high standard of skill and knowledge through continuing competency and record activities as part of re-registration;
- endeavour to obtain and present facts and interpretations in an objective and open manner;
- adhere to the requirements specified in relevant New Zealand and international legislation and regulations, and any appropriate codes of work practice.

## 3. Respect for Colleagues

Registered Nutritionists shall:

- support ethical behaviour, and professional conduct of their colleagues;
- support the professional development of colleagues by providing honest and productive feedback on work;
- recognize and acknowledge differences in opinion and remain objective;
- review the work of colleagues without bias and treat all information so provided as privileged and confidential;
- fairly record the intellectual, material and practical contributions of others to their work;
- ensure joint authors of publications and reports share responsibility for their contents;
- not allow or commit plagiarism;
- be aware of ethical, social, legal and environmental implications and consequences of their practice.

## 4. Respect for Community

Registered Nutritionists shall:

- endeavour to ensure that all public statements are correct and supported by evidence;

- ensure that all speculative and interpretative statements are identified as such;
- not condone the manipulation of results to meet the perceived needs, or requirements, of employers, funding agencies, the media or other interested parties;
- not attempt to influence public policy decisions where there is contradictory or inconclusive scientific evidence without disclosure of the circumstances;
- communicate the results of their work to the wider community where this is in the public interest;
- support the publication and dissemination of all competent research.

## 5. Working with clients providing dietary advice

### Scope of Practice\*

Registered Nutritionists working with clients providing dietary advice translate scientific evidence-based knowledge on the relationship between food and health at an individual or population level to promote well-being and prevent nutrition-related disorders in the New Zealand community.

\* The scope of practice is regulated by the Registration Panel of the Nutrition Society of NZ but not defined or regulated by the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003

Registered Nutritionists working with clients shall strive to:

- protect the health, wellbeing and dignity of clients;
- provide clients with relevant, impartial advice based on the best available scientific evidence in a manner that can be understood to enable decision-making;
- refer a client to other practitioners, or work with other practitioners, when the needs of the client fall outside the competence, skill level or scope of practice;
- respect the values, beliefs and freedom of choice of clients;
- be sensitive to cultural and social diversity;
- reduce the possibility for harm and enhance the quality of life of clients when providing services;
- provide an outline of costs and benefits, risks and potential side effects so the client can be well-informed when making decisions on any intervention;
- respect the confidentiality of clients when using social media;
- receive professional supervision to reflect on their practice;
- follow the NZ Health Standards for Health Records (NZS8153:2002) and respect the confidentiality and privacy of clients ensuring all information is confidential and securely stored.

## 6. Commercial bias, advertising and recommendation of products, brands and services

For the purposes of this code, advertising is considered as promotion of a product, brand or service in a public medium, for example, TV, magazine, social

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media, Registered Nutritionist's website, other online media. Section 5 covers the relationship with clients or small groups on an individual basis.

Registered Nutritionists who advertise products, brands or services must protect the health of the public by ensuring:

- all advertising of products, brands or services are supported by scientific evidence and align with credible New Zealand guidelines or criteria, for example Ministry of Health Eating and Activity Guidelines, Food Standards Australia New Zealand Nutrient Profiling Scoring Criterion for health claims, or are appropriate in the context of the audience to whom the advertising is declared;
- they do not bring the profession into disrepute;
- they place the health and wellbeing of the public before the personal and financial interests of themselves, or those close to them;
- they do not engage in any conduct that is misleading as to the nature, characteristics and/or suitability of any product and/or service;
- they avoid favourably comparing a product, brand or service to another unless there is evidence for the claim published by a reputable source;
- they fully disclose any conflicts of interest and any personal, financial or commercial interest held in products or services recommended;
- they give a balanced view during individual and group sessions of all options available that are appropriate in the context of the client's needs;
- they ensure they comply with the Fair-Trading Act and Food Standards Code;
- they make a declaration on their application for registration or re-registration that advertising and/or product promotion is undertaken.

## BREACHES OF THE CODE

This Code will be used by the Nutrition Society of New Zealand as a standard by which a Registered Nutritionist's conduct is measured. A failure by a Registered Nutritionist to comply with this Code may result in, as appropriate:

- a referral to the Registration Panel about the conduct or safety of practice of the Registered Nutritionist;
- the removal of registration of the nutritionist or such other action as the Nutrition Society may deem as appropriate;

The Registered Nutritionist in potential breach has a right to be heard and can appeal to the Appeals Committee regarding a decision.

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*The code has been developed with reference to the Code of Ethics and Conduct for Dietitians and the Royal Society of New Zealand Code of Professional Standards and Ethics.*