

NEW ZEALAND DIETITIANS BOARD

# Code of Ethics for Dietitians

DECEMBER 2003

Developed in consultation  
with the New Zealand Dietetic Association

## Preamble

This code of ethics has been developed by the New Zealand Dietitians Board in conjunction with the New Zealand Dietetic Association (NZDA).

This code has been adopted by the Dietitians Board and will be administered by the Dietitians Board under the provision of the Dietitians Act 1950. The Dietitians Act will be replaced by the Health Practitioners Competency Assurance Act in 2003.

Adherence to this code is an obligation of every New Zealand Registered Dietitian (NZRD)

The code reflects the ethical base to Dietetic practice. Dietitians value the ethical principles of autonomy, non maleficence, beneficence and justice.

The purpose of this code is to provide guidelines for individual dietitian's behaviour towards their patient/client, society, self and profession.

- The Code acknowledges the relevance of the Treaty of Waitangi in the delivery of dietetic services to all New Zealanders.
- Patient/client needs are given the highest priority in the practice of dietetics.
- Concerns and/or complaints about breaches of this code should be made to the Registrar, Dietitians Board of New Zealand.

## Role of the New Zealand Registered Dietitian

The registered dietitian is the dietetic professional who is registered to practise dietetics and whom assumes accountability and responsibility for her / his own actions.

Dietetics is the discipline of applying nutritional science to individuals and groups in states of disease and health. Evaluation of group and individual needs is undertaken within the social, economic and cultural context of the community and the prevailing health issues. The registered dietitian acts as a clinician, health promoter, food service manager, advocate, researcher, knowledge broker, resource manager, policy maker, advisor, educator, nutrition counselor, accreditor and quality manager.

The aim of dietetic practice is to promote positive health outcomes through optimal nutrition. The dietitian is a reflective practitioner and lifelong learner, continually critiquing her/his own performance and improving their standards of practice.

Pre registration programmes are designed to prepare a practitioner to provide safe, competent and responsible dietetic care in a variety of health settings. The overriding aim of these educational programmes is the development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes to enable the practitioner to provide quality dietetic care to individuals and groups. Dietetic care includes the provision of safe, enjoyable, nutritionally adequate and appropriate food and fluid to meet people's nutritional needs.

Educational programmes aim to develop competence in the principles and application of clinical nutrition, of communication and education, of nutritional health promotion, of management and food service systems management, of quality systems, of research, lifelong learning, culturally appropriate behavior and professionalism.

The registered dietitian recognises and practises within the limits of her / his education and competence. She/he is an independent and interdependent practitioner.

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### What is Dietetic Competence?

Dietetic competence is the ability of a person to fulfill the dietetic role safely and effectively. It encompasses the entire spectrum of knowledge and skills described above, but given the complexity of the role acknowledges that full expertise will develop with experience.

# Ethical Guidelines

## 1. Professional Competence

### The New Zealand Registered Dietitian (NZRD):

- (a) Practise of Dietetics is informed by evidence and management principles.
- (b) Honours the principles of partnership, protection and participation as an affirmation of the Treaty of Waitangi.
- (c) Assumes responsibility and accountability for personal competence in practice. Holds a current Annual Practising Certificate and demonstrates commitment to professional development through participation in the dietetic profession's Continuing Competency Programme.
- (d) Recognises and exercises professional judgement within the limits of her/his competence and seeks counsel and makes referrals as appropriate.

## 2. Relationships with Patients and Clients

### The New Zealand Registered Dietitian (NZRD):

- (a) Provides services that are evidence informed and professional with objectivity and respect for the unique needs and values of all individuals without discrimination.
- (b) Maintains confidentiality of patient/client information and maintains records that are objective, comprehensive, accurate and current.
- (c) Provides sufficient information to enable the patient/client to make their own informed decisions and act as the patients/clients advocate or agent if appropriate.
- (d) Conducts her/himself with honesty, integrity and fairness with no physical, sexual, financial or emotional exploitation of clients, and acts to prevent conflicts of interest.
- (e) Does not advertise in a false or misleading manner.
- (f) Dietitians are responsible for setting fees at the value of service and should be prepared to discuss the fees with the patients/clients.

### 3. Relationship with Colleagues

#### The New Zealand Registered Dietitian (NZRD):

- (a) Provides a supportive environment in the workplace and in professional organisations which encourages and promotes ethical behaviour, high professional standards and provides opportunities for career development.
- (b) Acts as a role model and supports the particular needs of the newly qualified dietitians.
- (c) Makes all reasonable efforts to avoid bias in any professional evaluation, recognising legitimate differences of opinion.
- (d) Provides full disclosure when a real or potential conflict of interest arises.
- (e) In inter-professional relationships the dietitian has respect for practice within the professional bounds of competence and exercises objectivity in respecting differences of professional opinion demonstrated by other registered health professionals.

## 4. Provision of Service in a Competitive Environment

### The New Zealand Registered Dietitian (NZRD):

- (a) Accepts responsibility to provide the best standards of service possible for patients/clients with the available resources.
- (b) Does not compromise standards of practice to meet commercial targets.
- (c) Dietitians do not allow their professional standing to be used in the direct endorsement of commercial products. Scientific evidence is the only basis on which a positive health statement should be made for the general principles the product or services exemplifies.
- (d) When dietitians are acting as agents for, or have a financial interest in a commercial organisation, their interest must be declared to patients/clients.
- (e) Does not accept inducements, gifts or hospitality that may affect or be seen to affect judgement when making referrals or arranging treatment or contracts.



## 5. Legal and Social Responsibilities

### The New Zealand Registered Dietitian (NZRD):

- (a) Complies with the Dietitians Act 1950, to be replaced by the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act and all other relevant laws and regulations.
- (b) Accepts the obligation to conduct her/himself in accordance with the ethical principles espoused in this code.
- (c) Reports to the Registrar of the Dietitians Board if she/he becomes aware that their professional competence, expertise, personal health status, circumstances or ability to practise may be impaired and needs to withdraw from or limit practice.
- (d) Accepts the obligation to raise any issues about breaches of the code and/or complaints about breaches of this code with the Registrar of the Dietitians Board.
- (e) Complies with the responsibilities set out in the Code of Consumers' Rights.

## Useful Contact Addresses

### Dietitians Board

PO Box 10–140

Wellington

Phone 04 499 7979

Email [dietitians@regboards.co.nz](mailto:dietitians@regboards.co.nz)

Website [www.dietitiansboard.co.nz](http://www.dietitiansboard.co.nz)

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### New Zealand Dietetic Association

PO Box 5065

Wellington

Email [nzda@dietitians.org.nz](mailto:nzda@dietitians.org.nz)

Website [www.dietitians.org.nz](http://www.dietitians.org.nz)

# Appendix

## Relevant legislation includes:

- \*Dietitians Act 1950 and Regulations
- Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975
- Privacy Act 1993 and Health Information Privacy Code 1994
- Health and Disability Commissioner Act 1994
- Mental Health Act 1992
- Human Rights Act 1993
- Bill of Rights Act 1990
- NZ Advertising Standard Authority
- Consumer Guarantees Act 1993
- Fair Trading Act 1986
- Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights 1996
- Health And Safety in Employment Act 2002
- Medicines Act

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\*This Act will be replaced by the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 on 18 September 2004.

## Footnote

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**Autonomy** is a person's independence and self reliance. An autonomous person can make her/his own decisions and carry out those decisions. Autonomy encompasses the individual's will to act independently and her/his freedom and ability within society for independent action. The limitations to independent action is that autonomous acts should neither harm others or interfere with their autonomy. This principle directs the practitioner (Dietitian) to respect the rights of others to have their own views and to make their own decisions so long as those decisions neither harm nor interfere with the autonomy of others.

**Non Maleficence** is the principle that Dietitians avoid harming others. Harm can be physiological, mental, and reputational, to personal property or be increased risk of harm.

**Beneficence** is performing acts that benefit others. Dietitians have a duty to benefit others.

**Justice** – The principle of justice is based on the ideal that equals should be treated equally. It is often defined as fairness. Dietitians provide services in an objective, non discriminatory and unbiased manner.