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Journal selections: Let's support our students' futures

Eva Stowers

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, eva.stowers@unlv.edu

Lesley J. Johnson

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Susan L. Meacham

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, smeacham@vcom.vt.edu

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Journal Selections; Let's Support our Students' Futures

Susan L. Meacham^{1*}, Lesley J. Johnson² and Eva D. Stowers³

^{1*}Department of Nutrition Sciences, ²Department of Food and Beverage Mgt.

³Lied Library, University of Nevada Las Vegas,

4505 SO. Maryland Parkway Box 453026

Las Vegas, NV 89154-3026, USA

smeacham@ccmail.nevada.edu

Dietetic educators concur that use of professional journals in the undergraduate curriculum promotes student reading skills (McCabe *et al.*, 1995), exposes students to current research, enhances computer skills (Evers, 1996; Parks, 1994; Raidl *et al.*, 1995; Carew *et al.*, 1997; Merkel *et al.*, 1998; Kipp, 1996) and prepares dietetic students for the real world environment. Those of us in educational institutions are continually asked to review our university library holdings; prioritizing on the basis of department selections, cost, rate of inflation, use by faculty and students and availability through interlibrary loans and other document retrieval procedures. No doubt, those in industry and clinical and private practice are also watching their budgets and are asked to review expenses for professional publications.

As 69% of American Dietetic Association (ADA) members regularly read the Journal of the American Dietetic Association (JADA), a logical place to begin journal prioritizing is to review the journal's "New in Review" department (Anonymous, 2000). "New in Review" appears monthly in JADA and lists article abstracts and titles of interest to members from other professional journals. In an attempt to develop a priority list for our university library's journal holdings for students studying nutrition at the University of Nevada Las Vegas, we tabulated the journals cited by JADA in "New in Review" over the past 5 years. Over 4,500 article abstracts and titles were cited from 53 different professional journals from January 1996 to December 2000. The journals were categorized into topic areas: (Table 1): clinical (31), dietetic association publications (4), education (2), foods (6), health promotion (4), and management (6).

Table 1: Topic areas represented (%) by professional journal article abstracts and titles from 1996-2000 in the Journal of the American Dietetic Association "New in Review"

Topic Area	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	% Total
Clinical	79%	78%	81%	86%	86%	82%
Assoc. Publ.	1	1	1	0	2	1
Education	3	4	3	3	4	3
Foods	7	6	7	5	3	6
Health	6	5	4	4	3	4
Management	4	6	4	2	2	4

The top ten periodicals over the 5 year period, ranked according to the most article abstracts and titles referenced, all represented clinical practice.

American Journal of Clinical Nutrition	(25%)
European Journal of Clinical Nutrition	(6%)
American Journal of Epidemiology	(6%)
Journal of Nutrition	(5%)
Diabetes Care	(4%)
Journal of the American College of Nutrition	(3%)
International Journal of Obesity Research and Metabolic Disorders	(3%)
Journal of the American Medical Association	(3%)

Archives of International Medicine (3%)

Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise (3%)

The distribution of referenced articles and the selected journals was fairly consistent throughout the five-year period with clinical articles representing 78-86% of all articles cited. The journals representing other topic areas were typically:

Dietetic Association Publications-Journals of the Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand Dietetic Associations

Education-Journal of Nutrition Education and Diabetes Educator

Foods-Food Technology, Journal of Food Protection, Journal of Food Composition and Analysis, Journal of Food Science

Health Promotion-American Journal of Public Health, American Journal of Health Promotion, Journal of Women's Health and Public Health Reports

Management-Food Management, Harvard Business Review, Health Care Manager, Hospital and Health Networks, School Food Service Research Review and Training Development.

According to the most recent survey of the ADA membership the primary positions held by registered dietitians in 1997 were as follows: clinical nutrition, 47.8%, food and nutrition management, 17.6%, community nutrition, 14.9%, consultation and business 11.7%, and education and research, 8.0%. In order to adequately serve the profession our educational programs' library holdings should parallel the employment trends for registered dietitians (Bryk, 1997). This indicates the need for dietetic educators to broaden the scope of professional readings offered to dietetic students to coincide with current employment.

Expanding our reading beyond the clinical area can also better prepare dietetic students for the increasing demand for multi-skilled health care providers. As we promote the dietitian's active participation in nontraditional roles on health care teams, continued exposure to the readings of other health professionals should also be available.

This brief analysis may raise more questions than it answers. For institutions beginning new educational programs, where do we begin when we ask our libraries to support our dietetics programs? Do the journals holdings reflect the needs of the membership? Offer support for entry-level dietitians? Do they broaden our scope of practice allowing for diverse employment opportunities? Are there other mechanisms by which we can offer publications for educational programs and professional development for registered dietitians? Journal selections should coincide with current and future job opportunities. Periodic review, therefore, is needed to maintain relevant journals for professional development and dietetic student education.

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