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REGISTERED DIETITIANS YOUR NUTRITION EXPERTS

FOR DISEASE MANAGEMENT,
PREVENTION AND
COST-EFFECTIVE CARE



Rising health-care costs, the obesity epidemic and the medical needs of an aging population are extreme challenges facing your organization. Registered dietitians (RDs) can be instrumental in cost-effectively managing the health of your members.

RDs provide vital food and nutrition services, while promoting health and well being to the public. They are an essential part of a multidisciplinary health-care team responsible for integrating nutrition goals into your members' treatment plans.

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) identifies registered dietitians as qualified professionals for nutrition therapy. According to IOM, "the registered dietitian is currently the single identifiable group of health-care professionals with standardized education, clinical training, continuing education and national credentialing requirements necessary to be directly reimbursed as a provider of nutrition therapy."

RD = COST EFFECTIVENESS

Registered dietitians receive extensive training that combines academic preparation with hands-on, practical patient experience. In order to receive their credentials, RDs must complete a minimum of a bachelor's degree, participate in a practice program involving direct patient interaction and pass a national registration exam. Additionally, to ensure that their knowledge base remains relevant and up to date, RDs are also required to complete continuing education.



RDs PROVIDE MEDICAL NUTRITION THERAPY (MNT)

Registered dietitians are the best-qualified health-care professionals to deliver MNT services for disease management in acute and ambulatory-care settings. MNT is an effective treatment for serious diseases and conditions such as obesity, diabetes, cancer, heart disease, hypertension, HIV/AIDs and kidney disease. Additionally, RDs provide nutrition services for prevention and wellness. As members of a multidisciplinary team, RDs can significantly help improve outcomes and reduce risk of chronic diseases.

During an MNT intervention, RDs counsel clients on behavioral and lifestyle changes required to impact their long-term eating habits and health. Medical Nutrition Therapy includes:

- performing a comprehensive nutrition assessment
- determining the nutrition diagnosis
- planning and implementing a nutrition intervention using evidence-based nutrition practice guidelines
- monitoring and evaluating an individual's progress over subsequent visits with the RD.

RDs APPLY EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE

RDs provide care by applying the American Dietetic Association's Evidence-Based Nutrition Practice Guidelines. The Guidelines illustrate best practice for MNT related to a specific disease or condition in order to achieve positive outcomes. Research on the effectiveness of MNT indicates:

- RDs providing MNT over an average of three visits for patients with either type 1 or type 2 diabetes mellitus resulted in 1% to 2% decreases in hemoglobin A1C.
 - RDs providing MNT over two to six visits resulted in a 6% to 13% reduction in total plasma cholesterol and 7% to 14% reduction in low-density lipoprotein cholesterol.
 - RD-led dietary intervention provided over two or more visits to heart failure patients led to positive changes in sodium and fluid intake and improvement in quality of life.
 - RD interventions helped improve dietary compliance for chronic kidney disease patients.
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THE BENEFITS OF COVERING NUTRITION SERVICES PROVIDED BY RDs

Nutrition services provided by registered dietitians are cost-effective for both preventive health care and disease management. Health-care costs such as hospitalizations, doctor visits and expensive medications may be reduced when members receive counseling by RDs.

The following examples demonstrate how RDs impact the cost of treatment:

- University of Virginia School of Medicine reported that an RD case-management approach to lifestyle care can improve diverse indicators of health, including weight, waist circumference, health-related quality of life and use of prescription medications among obese persons with type 2 diabetes. These results were seen with a minimal cost of \$350 per year per patient.
- Massachusetts General Hospital reported that participants who received group MNT provided by registered dietitians in a six-month randomized trial had a 6% decrease in total and LDL-cholesterol levels. The study revealed a savings of \$4.28 for each dollar spent on MNT compared with statin therapy.
- When the U.S. Department of Defense established a nutrition therapy program led by RDs for more than 636,000 patients with cardiovascular disease, renal disease and diabetes, it saved \$3.1 million in the first year.



To most effectively control health-care costs while meeting the personal health needs of your members, expand coverage decisions to include RD-provided services.