



THE BRITISH DIETETIC ASSOCIATION

The Professional Association for Registered Dietitians
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Media Release

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DIETITIANS ISSUE WARNING ABOUT 'NUTS'

Dietitians are warning people about the rise in the number of self-styled and unqualified nutritional therapists after a patient of an Oxfordshire based 'nutritionist' won a £810,000 settlement. The British Dietetic Association is urging people wanting nutrition advice to only visit professionals registered with the Health Professions Council (HPC).

Recently the Oxford Mail reported that Dawn Page was put on a weight reducing diet that recommended excessive amounts of water and a low salt by Barbara Nash a self-styled nutritionist; advice which Mrs. Page's husband alleges caused 'uncontrolled vomiting and a fit' and resulted in brain damage.

The role of food and diet in maintaining health, or managing disease, has never been so popular with the public and in the media, but this popularity can permit such self-styled nutritionists to promote – sometimes by z-list celebrities - their unique and frequently inaccurate interpretation of nutrition to a public hungry for information and solutions to their health problems without fear of redress.

Dietitians can make sense out of nutrition science, turning evidence from research into easy, practical suggestions for what to eat and drink, taking into account an individual's lifestyle, budget and health. The title 'dietitian' is legally protected by the HPC and dietitians are independent nutrition experts who can provide advice that is current, unbiased and evidence based. They also work to a strict ethical code of conduct that prevents them from recommending inappropriate nutritional advice, herbal supplements or diagnostic tests.

Self-styled, unqualified or questionably 'qualified' nutritional therapists may offer fantasy diets and unproven treatments to aid weight loss or improved wellness but they can also compromise the quality of the diet overall. Whilst hearing the need to eat five portions of fruit and vegetables a day and regular exercise may not be sexy or new, the recommendation is based on sound science that works and is safe advice to follow.

Registered Dietitian and spokesperson for the British Dietetic Association Catherine Collins says: "It is a tragedy that such cases are not isolated incidents but increasing in occurrence and dietitians have to cope with the aftermath of incorrect nutritional advice. A year ago I had a similar patient with hyponatraemic coma caused by incorrect advice given by a self-styled gym nutritionist.

Website: <http://www.bda.uk.com>

“If one pretended to be a qualified neurosurgeon or dentist and was not, the law would forbid them from practicing but the dietetic profession has to compete with enthusiastic amateurs usually incompetent in clinical nutrition. As a result the public are playing a nutritional Russian roulette with their health.

“With so many claims about diet and health banded around it can be difficult to know what or who to believe, so it is important that people looking for diet and nutritional advice ensure they are being treated by properly qualified and registered health dietitian.”

Registered dietitians (RDs) have a university degree or post-graduate qualification, based on nutrition science, with clinical knowledge and the ability to translate this science into practical dietary advice gained during supervised training in both clinical and community settings. HPC registration ensures that dietitians are safe and competent to practice, adhere to a strict code of ethics, and must maintain their professional status through continued professional development.

The British Dietetic Association has a website (<http://www.bda.uk.com>) dedicated to promoting scientifically sound nutritional facts that can help avoid misleading and potentially dangerous advice being followed as well as advice on how to access registered freelance dietitians. To check if a health professional is registered go to <http://www.hpcheck.org/lisa/onlineregister/MicrositeSearchInitial.jsp>

Media enquiries to The British Dietetic Association should be directed to our media hotline on 0870 850 2517 or pr@bda.uk.com.

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Notes to Editors

1. The British Dietetic Association, founded in 1936, is the professional association for registered dietitians in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It is the nation's largest organisation of food and nutrition professionals with nearly 6,000 members. About two-thirds of members are employed in the National Health Service. The remaining members work in education, industry, research, sport settings or freelance.
2. Registered dietitians hold the only legally-recognisable graduate qualification in nutrition and dietetics. They are experts in interpreting and translating the science of nutrition into practical ways of promoting nutritional well-being, disease treatment and the prevention of nutrition-related problems. Their advice is sound and based on current scientific evidence. Registration, awarded by the Health Professionals Council, is an indication that a dietitian is fit to practise and is working within an agreed statement of conduct. For further details about the British Dietetic Association, please visit our website: www.bda.uk.com