



PRESS RELEASE

Dietitian, nutritionist, food advisor, do YOU know the difference?

Health Professions Council and British Dietetic Association launch joint media awareness campaign.

The Health Professions Council (HPC) and the British Dietetic Association (BDA) have launched a joint campaign to raise awareness of the role of 'dietitians' and warn consumers against seeking advice from unregulated and inappropriately qualified sources.

The public are increasingly being bombarded with advice from various sources offering quick fix cures or the latest fad diets, as well as a plethora of websites promoting the use of supplements and vitamins backed by unsubstantiated health claims or spurious scientific evidence.

The HPC and BDA launched a case study appeal to highlight the work of dietitians across the UK and unearthed some alarming and dangerous evidence of patients suffering adverse reactions to treatments recommended to them by non-dietitians. These included:

- nursery pupils put on an all-vegetarian menu that put them at risk of iron deficiency
- a nine year old with Down's Syndrome who was prescribed a thyroid supplement which is only recommended for those over 12 years old
- a woman in her 50's with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome being advised to take £60 a month's worth of supplements, when a healthy balanced diet was all that was required to improve her health

The case study appeal also highlighted many cases of dietitians treating patients who had previously been given bad advice, for example, preventing a woman from having gastric banding surgery and a teenager with Asperger's Syndrome who was able to calm down his impulsive and aggressive behaviour following a dietitian's intervention.

As statutorily regulated and qualified health professionals, dietitians work to strict codes of conduct that prevent them from recommending inappropriate nutritional advice, herbal supplements or diagnostic tests. As independent nutrition experts they can provide advice that is current, unbiased and evidence based.

HPC's Chief Executive, Marc Seale, commented:

"The title 'dietitian' is legally protected by the HPC. HPC registration means that dietitians meet our standards in education and training, adhere to a strict code of ethics, and must maintain their professional status through continued professional development."

“The HPC was set up in order to protect the public and we strongly believe that statutory regulation can more effectively assure that practitioners are meeting standards and are fit to practise.”

BDA's Chairman, Pauline Douglas, commented:

“The role of food and diet in maintaining a healthy lifestyle has never been so popular with the public and in the media. We are living in a health conscious society and it's important that the public are able to make informed decisions about their diet and health and where – and from whom - to seek advice.”

She added:

”It is important that the public recognise and understand what dietitians do, as there are many sources offering advice about diet and health – some of which are erroneous and potentially harmful, if not devastating. Dietitians use the most up to date public health and scientific research on food, health and disease, which they translate into easy practical guidance to enable people to make appropriate lifestyle and food choices, taking into account an individual's lifestyle, budget and health.”

Dietitians work in the NHS, private practice, industry, education, research, sport, media, public relations, publishing, NGOs and government. Their advice influences food and health policy across the spectrum from government, local communities and individuals.

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Notes to Editors:

1. For further information on the case studies attached please contact Ebony Gayle, Communications Manager on 020 7840 9784/ ebony.Gayle@hpc-uk.org or the BDA media hotline on 0870 850 2517 or pr@bda.uk.com.
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 Professions 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
3. 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>
4. 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.
5. The Health Professions Council is an independent, UK-wide health regulator set up by the Health Professions Order (2001). The HPC keeps a register for 13 different health professions and only registers people who meet the standards it sets for their training, professional skills, behaviour and health. The HPC will take action against people who do not meet these standards or who use a protected title illegally.
6. The HPC currently regulate the following 13 professions. Each of these professions has one or more 'protected titles'. Anyone who uses one of these titles must register with the HPC. To see the full list of protected titles please see: www.hpc-uk.org/aboutregistration/protectedtitles/.