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# The Army Dietetic Mentorship Program: Making the Most Out of Mentoring

M.A. Worley

*U.S. Army Medical Department Center and School, Fort Sam Houston*

M.B. Salgueiro

*U.S. Army Medical Department Center and School, Fort Sam Houston*

D.R. Hernandez

*U.S. Army Medical Department Center and School, Fort Sam Houston*

C.J. Buck

*U.S. Army Medical Department Center and School, Fort Sam Houston*

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**Title:** THE ARMY DIETETIC MENTORSHIP PROGRAM: MAKING THE MOST OUT OF MENTORING

**Author(s):** M. A. Worley, M. B. Salgueiro, D. R. Hernandez, C. J. Buck; U.S. Army Medical Department Center and School, Fort Sam Houston, TX

**Learning Outcome:** To describe the Army's Dietetic Mentorship Program and its effect on personnel and professional development of recent internship graduates.

**Text:** Mentoring is a passionate subject in academia, business, and the military. Benefits include: increased employee retention, improved productivity, and professional development. The Army's operational tempo makes it difficult for leaders to find time for mentoring. Educators in the U.S. Military Dietetic Internship Consortium received feedback indicating the need for dietitian mentorship, which led to a formal survey of program graduates to determine mentoring needs. Survey results suggested that new graduates did not always receive guidance on expectations, duty performance, military professionalism, and career planning. A one-year "structured mentoring" initiative was developed. Mentors and mentees were matched based on a needs assessment, and mentors were provided information to discuss during monthly sessions. Program goals were to facilitate the transition from dietetic intern to staff member; provide continual military orientation; improve job satisfaction; develop technical and leadership skills; and introduce mentoring benefits. To evaluate effectiveness, an end of program survey was completed by each group using a five-point Likert-type scale to elicit responses to items related to program structure, mentoring relationship and benefits. Response rate was 88% and results indicate that the program structure and matching process worked well, and program goals were achieved. Unexpected mentee beneficial outcomes included completion of a research protocol, selection for promotion, advanced specialty certification, and enrollment into a MS program. Due to this success, senior leadership expanded the program to include all new fully-credentialed Army dietitians. This effective mentoring program is now a key to Army dietitians acclimating to their role as military officers and dietitians.

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**Title:** DEVELOPMENT OF A MEDICAL NUTRITION THERAPY RESOURCE GUIDE OUTLINE FOR DIETETIC STUDENTS AND INTERNS AT SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY

**Author(s):** T. Pomerleau,<sup>1</sup> K. P. Sucher,<sup>1</sup> S. Vinson<sup>2</sup>; <sup>1</sup>Nutrition and Food Science, San Jose State University, San Jose, CA, <sup>2</sup>Nutrition Services, O'Connor Hospital, San Jose, CA

**Learning Outcome:** Utilize a MNT resource guide outline to aid in educating dietetic students and interns.

**Text:** Dietetic students must apply cumulative knowledge and skills during their post didactic supervised practice internship. To determine what to include in a Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT) Guide outline for dietetic students preparing for their internship, Dietetic internship (DI) directors at DI sites nationwide, DI preceptors (n = 250 DI directors/preceptors) and recent dietetic interns (n = 88) at San Jose State University's DI program were surveyed. A total of 38 questions on nutrition assessment (6), diseases (13), recommendations, comments and suggestions (7), affiliation (1), resources (3), miscellaneous (2) and demographics (6). 80 completed the survey (60 DI directors/preceptors, 20 interns). **Results:** all groups identified diabetes as number one followed by cardiovascular diseases, gastrointestinal disorders, metabolic syndrome and hypertension. These and other findings were incorporated into a MNT Guide outline. In addition, nearly all the directors/preceptors (n=55) agreed that the greatest challenge for new interns is in applying their broad knowledge base to practical clinical application. Approximately half of the directors/preceptors ranked the other challenges as: difficulty handling the fast pace of a clinical setting (n= 34), time management skills (n= 33), perhaps due to little or no hospital work experience (n= 32). About one quarter of directors/preceptors (n= 16) indicated other issues: lacking ability to synthesize relevant patient data, learning to think and act like a professional and on the job issues such as dealing with sick patients and knowledge of different medications. This information should be provided to student in MNT courses and interns before starting their MNT rotation.

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**Title:** DISSEMINATION OF THE SPECIAL QUALIFICATION FOR NUTRITION (SQIN) PROGRAM FOR MEDICAL STUDENTS

**Author(s):** S. T. St. Jeor,<sup>1</sup> J. Krenkel,<sup>1</sup> B. Scott,<sup>1</sup> C. Gerweck,<sup>1</sup> R. Plodkowski<sup>2</sup>; <sup>1</sup>Div. Medical Nutrition, Dept. Internal Medicine, Univ. Nevada School Medicine, Reno, NV, <sup>2</sup>Div. Endocrinology, Dept. Internal Medicine, Univ. Nevada School Medicine, Reno, NV

**Learning Outcome:** The attendee will be able to identify components of a nutrition education program that have high feasibility to be implemented in a multidisciplinary education setting.

**Text:** Innovative programs are needed to encourage the integration of nutrition into medical education and clinical practice. The Center for Nutrition and Metabolism (CNM) Clinic provides the interdisciplinary team structure and educational base for the Special Qualifications in Nutrition (SQIN) program through its focus on weight management for the prevention and treatment of obesity. Medical students are competitively selected for the SQIN Fellowship Program that provides opportunities for them to elect an enhanced four-year curriculum (summer research project for ~200 hours and ~40 additional nutrition related curricular hours in subsequent years) to obtain the "SQIN" nutrition qualification recognition at graduation. Initiated in 1996, 3 to 6 medical students have been enrolled each year. Nine classes have been graduated to 2007 with a total of 26 SQIN medical students completing the program. The SQIN model and CNM Clinic opportunities have been successfully disseminated to other disciplines by individualizing requirements and experiences to meet student and program requirements. The SQIN program has also enrolled both undergraduate and graduate students of allied health disciplines (2 nursing, 1 health ecology, 1 public health and 2 PhD psychology students) as well as 7 medical residents and 2 geriatric fellows. The SQIN programs build upon the expertise of 8 registered dietitians, as faculty in the Division of Medical Nutrition and in clinical practice with the Center of Nutrition and Metabolism. New opportunities are created for the integration of nutrition education and research where its importance is demonstrated and recognized.

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**Title:** USING SERVICE LEARNING TO CREATE ADVOCACY FOR NUTRITION EDUCATION

**Author(s):** A. Sinclair, L. Zinger; Health, Physical Education and Dance, City University of New York, Bayside, NY

**Learning Outcome:** Learner will be able to develop their own service learning plan for nutrition education.

**Text:** Service learning integrates academic learning and relevant community service with classroom instruction, focusing on critical, reflective thinking and personal and civic responsibility.

Community college students in an urban setting were recruited in this pilot project and guided through a local supermarket and taught how to read food labels, what foods to select more of and those to limit. Each student was provided with a \$25 grocery store voucher to purchase healthy and unfamiliar foods. Following the supermarket tour, students participated in a "cooking" class utilizing healthy foods.

After the project, students went out into their communities to conduct similar grocery tours and cooking demos. As a result of this project, students reported success in applying the knowledge and skills learned from one setting to another.

This project helped college students translate nutrition education into community action.

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