



AMERICAN DIETETIC ASSOCIATION

# Priorities for Research

Agenda To Support

The Future of Dietetics

# Priorities for Research:

## Agenda to Support the Future of Dietetics

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The American Dietetic Association (ADA) has identified research priorities in the areas of dietetics, nutrition, behavioral and social sciences, management, basic science, and food science leading to the promotion of optimal nutrition and well being for all people.

Through a careful evaluative process the American Dietetic Association has identified nine areas of basic and applied knowledge. These areas need to be focuses for future research and will require translation into evidence-based practice for dietitians. The ultimate goal is the improved health and well being of the US population.

In each of the identified priority research areas critical broad-based questions are asked. These questions are intended to guide the development of specific researchable questions. The intent is that the results of the research will be applicable to a variety of settings that encompass prevention and treatment of all disease conditions as well as promotion of optimal health throughout the entire life cycle and address the needs of various cultural/ethnic and psychosocial/socioeconomic groups.

These priorities serve as the basis for communication and advocacy. The ADA will select various roles for each of the research priority areas such as advocacy, facilitator, convener, educator, disseminator, and to a lesser degree, funder of the desired research. These roles are further explained in the Research Philosophy in Appendix A.

Guided by these criteria the following are identified as nine priority research areas for ADA:

- **Prevention and Treatment of Obesity and Associated Chronic Diseases**
- **Effective Nutrition and Lifestyle Change Interventions**
- **Translation of Research into Nutrition Interventions and Programs**
- **Effective Nutrition Indicators and Outcome Measures**
- **Dietetics Education and Retention**
- **Delivery of and Payment for Dietetic Services**
- **Access to Safe and Secure Food Supply**
- **Customer Satisfaction**
- **Nutrients and Gene Expression**

The research agenda will help guide ADA decisions regarding research directions and use of resources over the coming years. The American Dietetic Association will take responsibility for stimulating research in all the priority areas by (1) communicating research needs to organizations better qualified to conduct research in a specific area, e.g. areas such as nutrients and gene expression, (2) finding partners with whom to collaborate on particular research initiatives and projects and (3) initiating and funding projects that are of the highest priority or are more clearly Association-related.



The American Dietetic Association is in a unique position to play a pivotal role in the dissemination of new knowledge and its translation into all areas of dietetics practice through its new evidence-based approach to developing practice guidelines. Through this initiative every research effort is likely to have a larger impact on public health and disease management. The agenda will be updated periodically and will be used to gauge the success of reaching the strategic research goals of the profession.

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## RESEARCH PRIORITIES

For each of the priority areas selected, several examples are provided. While these areas are listed separately, in fact many of them are interdependent. The questions are posted on the ADA web site: <http://www.eatright.org>.

### **1. Identify effectiveness of methods, programs, and strategies for the prevention and treatment of obesity and associated chronic diseases and how we collaborate with other healthcare professionals.**

- Identify effective and ineffective roles and strategies for dietetic professionals to prevent and treat overweight/obesity and related diseases, especially prevention of overweight in children and throughout life cycle.
- Identify the long-term health effects of specific nutrition and physical activity interventions, especially in chronic diseases and relapse prevention for the treatment of overweight/obesity.
- Identify the most effective strategies to assess individuals/communities or subpopulations and translate research findings into actions for individuals and groups to reduce prevalence of overweight/obesity and chronic disease.
- Identify effective marketing and enrollment strategies (including subpopulations) to prevent and reduce obesity, including ways of thinking and worldviews that hold social, governmental, and commercial behaviors in place.
- Identify the biological and psychosocial control of eating habits, including pharmacology, complimentary and alternative strategies, and feeding behavior.



**2. Identify the most effective nutrition and lifestyle education, communication, and behavior change strategies for positive nutrition and health outcomes.**

- Identify the characteristics of effective dietary and lifestyle interventions in children and adults to allow tailoring interventions to individual needs and cultures.
- Identify the most effective behavioral change strategies for specific subpopulations and/or in various settings.
- Determine the most effective communication strategies and messages for specific subpopulations and/or various settings.

**3. Examine methods for translating existing research into effective nutrition interventions and programs.<sup>1</sup>**

- Assess the current level, type, and quality standards used in translational research conducted by ADA members.
- Identify basic science research in need of translation to specific clinical or community settings.
- Identify drivers, barriers, models and that impact the effectiveness of implementing research findings.

**4. Identify effective nutrition indicators of disease risk, new methods for nutrition assessment and appropriate health outcome measures and indicators for individuals and populations in various settings.**

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<sup>1</sup> Translational research is taking discovered facts and determining how to apply the findings to improve health and make life better. Translational researchers must understand the fundamental research being applied, including nutrition science and practice and have the ability to apply this knowledge in an innovative manner in the clinic and community. Translational research is the testing of knowledge gained from animal studies, theoretical models and test-tube findings in the human organism. It applies to the human those findings that arise from the study of animals (e.g. rat, monkey, microbes), psychological theory (e.g. thoughts, beliefs, ideas) and cellular studies (e.g. human tissue).



- Identify the accuracy of field methods and technology for assessing nutritional status in different age groups and populations.
  - Energy and nutrient intakes
  - Energy expenditure
  - Body composition
  - Biochemical parameters
- Identify the most effective methods to assure that clients' nutritional needs are met in a safe and effective manner.
- Identify key biomarkers reflecting nutritional status and/or dietary intake.

**5. Identify the best methods for attracting, educating, and retaining competent dietetics professionals.**

- Identify the knowledge, skills and competencies that are critical for effective dietetics practice for entry level or advanced practice.
- Identify the most effective educational methods and strategies to facilitate competent dietetics practice throughout the professionals' career.
- Identify career paths that position ADA members to be leaders in translating research into practice.
- Identify the trends in employment of dietetic professionals.
- Identify effective strategies to attract diverse dietetics professionals, including diverse individuals including those interested in career changes.
- Identify effective strategies to retain dietetic professionals.

**6. Identify the most effective methods for the delivery of dietetic services and payment for those services.**

- Identify the best method of measuring appropriate health /wellness outcome measures/indicators related to dietetic services.



- Identify the cost-effectiveness of technology, health care systems, payment systems, food production systems, and health care providers.
- Identify the effect of changes within the workforce (diversity, availability, skills and competencies, value systems, communication) on food and nutrition delivery systems.
- Identify effective strategies to ensure access to dietetic services.
- Identify effective strategies to ensure appropriate payment/reimbursements for dietetic services.
- Identify impact of state and federal recognition/reimbursement on dietetic practice and payment.
  - Licensure
  - Medicare provider status
  - Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) code changes
  - Other third party payers

**7. Identify ways to improve access to a safe and adequate food supply regardless of social and financial status.**

- Identify optimal strategies to assure the safety and nutritional quality of the food and water supply at critical control points throughout the food chain.
  - Food processing methods
  - Food in emergency situation or bioterrorism
  - Pesticides & herbicides
  - Monitoring strategies
- Identify the barriers and appropriate behavioral change strategies that will result in the adoption of safe food handling practices.
  - Individuals in high-risk populations or food service personnel and others providing food to targeted groups e.g., elderly, infants, immunosuppressed.
  - Consumers at home.
  - Retail food establishments.
- Assess the effectiveness and efficiency of food assistance programs in meeting the nutritional needs of populations as shown by impact on nutrient intake, incidence of, overweight/obesity, and adequacy of growth and development.
- Identify long-term nutritional effects of the changing food environment, such as fortification, new ingredients introduced into the food supply, biotechnology, and dietary supplements.



**8. Identify effective methods to measure and monitor customer satisfaction in various practice settings.**

- Identify or develop and validate cost effective standards, measurement tools, and methodologies for evaluating customer satisfaction that can be implemented in various dietetic practice settings.
- Identify determinants and predictors of customer satisfaction models for various dietetic practice settings, providers, products, services, and customer profiles.
- Identify and benchmark current levels of customer satisfaction in various dietetic practice settings.

**9. Explore the interaction among whole diet, nutrients and gene expression.**

- Explore how changes in energy, food and nutrient intakes impact or change gene expression and what these changes mean to health.
- Identify the genotypes, including clinical indicators of these genotypes that are most likely to benefit from dietary and lifestyle modifications.
- Identify effective strategies to integrate knowledge gained from gene-nutrient research into dietetics practice.

## **Conclusion**

This document provides a blueprint for ADA's research and advocacy activities in the areas of dietetics, nutrition, behavioral and social, management, basic, and food sciences. We believe that research should be driven by the immediate and pressing needs of the public, dietetics profession, and ADA members. ADA will use this agenda to identify resources and advocate for support for the needs of the dietetics professional as they strive to promote optimal nutrition and well being for all people.



## Appendix A Research Philosophy and Roles

**The ADA believes that research is the foundation of the profession providing the basis for practice, education and policy.**

Dietetics is the integration and application of principles derived from the sciences of nutrition, biochemistry, physiology, food management, and behavioral and social sciences to achieve and maintain people's health; therefore, dietetics research is a dynamic collaborative and assimilative endeavor. This research is broad in scope ranging from basic to applied practice research.

Dietetic professionals are responsible to incorporate research into all areas of practice. Both the Code of Ethics and Standards of Professional Practice identify the roles of dietetic professionals in research. The Code of Ethics states that the dietetic professional practices are based on scientific principles and current information. The Standards of Professional Practice states that each dietetics professional effectively applies, participates in or generates research to enhance practice.

The Association uses research as the basis of decisions, policy, and communication in a variety of roles. The Association's organizational roles related to research include advocating, facilitating, convening, funding, disseminating, and educating its members. The Association accomplishes these roles collaboratively with other scientists and organizations. The following is an explanation of these various research roles:

**Advocacy** = Involves identifying federal and non-governmental agencies/organizations/individuals who can support the Association's research agenda. Examples of advocacy roles would be for the Association to identify research questions for USDA/ERS or the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, or to testify before congressional leaders on the importance of research funding for data collection and nutrition monitoring.

**Facilitator** = Involves targeting key research questions to be answered and facilitating a successful process to answer these questions. For example, ADA would facilitate partnerships or multidisciplinary collaboration between various researchers to find potential funding sources and conduct the research.

**Convener** = Involves convening key scientists and practitioners from various disciplines to explore new approaches in solving dietetics related research questions. Examples might be convening a meeting to discuss research needed to address childhood weight management treatment and prevention.

**Funder** = Prepares, disseminates and funds research proposals on key research questions important to the profession. Sometimes this process involves funding for research under RFA or RFP and other times the research is actually conducted in house. The amount of funding is dependent on the availability of internal and external funds.

**Educator** = Develops professional development opportunities for members to enhance their knowledge of how to read, interpret, translate, integrate and use research. The Association also provides professional development opportunities for members to enhance their abilities to conduct high quality research.

**Disseminator** = Distributes research results to members and the public through publications, websites, and print and electronic media.

