

# The importance of Continuing Professional Development as a Nutrition Professional

Nutritional science has evolved rapidly over the last 50 years, and there is now compelling evidence that lifestyle practices, including those linked to nutrition, have a strong influence over health and disease, and are associated with leading causes of death.<sup>1,2</sup> Despite this strong link between nutrition and disease, a recent survey conducted as part of British Nutrition Foundation Healthy Eating Week found that 43% of adults struggle to find accurate information on what constitutes a healthy diet, with mixed messages and advice from media and experts being cited as the biggest cause of confusion (76% and 61% respectively).<sup>3</sup> This shows a compelling need to markedly improve nutrition education for the public.

Nutrition professionals play a key role in helping to translate and disseminate nutritional science amongst the public, yet, according to the public, their most commonly reported source of nutritional information comes from social media platforms (with less than a third of adults reporting they use the NHS or regulated health websites to gather nutritional information).<sup>2</sup> The constantly evolving nature of nutritional science can lead to a lack of confidence in the science surrounding new topics, which are particularly vulnerable to misinterpretation and provide a barrier to integrating knowledge into practice.

There perhaps has never been a greater time for building stronger relationships and trust between scientists, the media and the public. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) plays a crucial role in keeping up to date with, and correctly interpreting, the latest evidence-based research, and is one of The Nutrition Society's central aims of advancing nutritional science through the Nutrition Society Training Academy (NSTA).

Focusing on evidence-based training through webinars, all NSTA webinars are CPD endorsed, and attendees receive a certificate and CPD reflection sheet to encourage reflective practice. Since launching in 2018, NSTA has had over 1000 participants across all webinars, with very positive feedback:

*"As always with NSTA webinars it was very informative and evidenced based."*

*"A convenient means of learning, especially without travel costs!"*

*"Excellent presenting style. Well structured, informative yet concise."*

*Time and investment were worth it."*

Another crucial skill that allows nutritional scientists to better inform the public is to be able to critically analyse the headlines and the research that sits behind them effectively. Critical appraisal should not be mistaken for an opportunity to disregard or list the limitations of new research, rather it should allow for the discussion of both strengths and weaknesses of new research to create opportunities for new collaborations and stronger evidence. Whilst scientists understand the importance of this as a practice, becoming confident in critical appraisal takes time. To address this, the Nutrition Society Journal Club (NSJC) was launched for members as a way of enabling critical appraisal skills and interpreting the research far beyond the headlines. Not only is this a great opportunity for academics, it provides

the space for those in other nutrition professions to critically appraise new research, led by a senior facilitator to develop key critical appraisal techniques. Each monthly NSJC contributes towards 60 minutes of CPD and is endorsed by the Association for Nutrition (AfN).

Recent NSJCs have discussed headline producing papers, providing an exciting opportunity to get behind the media headlines.

The NSTA want to make this resource as accessible as possible so the NSJC is a free member benefit run online, allowing you to participate from wherever you are. If you are not a Nutrition Society member, joining enables you to participate in the NSJC immediately and receive discounts on the NSTA webinars. Find out more about membership: [www.nutritionssociety.org/membership](http://www.nutritionssociety.org/membership)

The NSTA values your opinion and welcomes your ideas on future training to ensure continued support to professionals at all stages of career development. To submit your training ideas, or to receive training calendar alerts, please contact the Society's Professional Development Manager, Jade Mitchell: [training@nutritionssociety.org](mailto:training@nutritionssociety.org)

References: **1.** WHO (2002). Diet, Nutrition and the prevention of chronic diseases report of the joint WHO/FAO expert consultation. WHO Technical Report Series. Accessed online: [www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/publications/trs916/summary/en/](http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/publications/trs916/summary/en/) (Mar 2020). **2.** Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition. (2016). Food Systems and Diets: Facing Challenges of the 21st Century. Accessed online: <http://glopan.org/sites/default/files/ForesightReport.pdf> (Mar 2020). **3.** British Nutrition Foundation (2018). Mixed messages from health and news sources leave UK adults confused about nutrition. Accessed online: [www.nutrition.org.uk/press-office/pressreleases/1156-mixedmessages.html](http://www.nutrition.org.uk/press-office/pressreleases/1156-mixedmessages.html) (Mar 2020).

## Events Calendar

### May

- **12 May 2020 – 13:00- 14:00:** Sugar, Fat, Alcohol... What's Worse for the Liver?

### Coming soon:

Introduction to Human Nutrition webinar series.

You can also take part in past webinars at a variety of times and days. View the full NSTA programme:

[www.nutritionssociety.org/training-academy](http://www.nutritionssociety.org/training-academy)