

Recap of SCAN Discussion

SCAN Discussion on the Student Community of Interest 11-5 to 11-12-07

In early November, three members of the Sports, Cardiovascular and Wellness Dietetic Practice Group (SCAN) took time to discuss their careers and answer some questions posed by ADA student members. The discussion ran from November 5 to 12 and can be read in its entirety on the Student CoI. The SCAN members who participated are:

- Melissa Ohlson, RD, Nutrition Projects Coordinator for the Department of Preventive Cardiology and Rehabilitation at the Cleveland Clinic
- Christine A. Rosenbloom, PhD, RD, Professor in the Division of Nutrition and Associate Dean for Academics in the College of Health and Human Sciences at Georgia State University in Atlanta
- Jessica Setnick, MS, RD, CSSD, author of *The Eating Disorders Clinical Pocket Guide: Quick Reference for Healthcare Providers* and co-author of *The Eating Disorders Book of Hope and Healing: Affirmations for Anyone Who Eats*

Here are a few of the questions and responses from that discussion:

Question

Hi, I am really interested in having a career in sports nutrition, and after hearing about such careers like that at the Gatorade Sports Science Institute, I am almost certain this is the path I would like to follow. I was just hoping you could share the experiences you had leading up to this career (summer experience, volunteer, and dietetic internship wise), how you came upon this job, and maybe tell us more about exactly what it is you do as a sports dietitian. I also wanted to know if there were any summer experiences specifically in this field of sports nutrition.

Response

First, I should point out that being on one of the 3 boards of the Gatorade Sports Science Institute is an appointment, not a career option. Scientists, sports dietitians, athletic trainers, and strength and conditioning coaches are invited to join the board to help disseminate research from the GSSI lab. GSSI does hire researchers (one is an RD) who have research graduate degrees and have conducted research on exercise physiology and hydration on human subjects in labs.

The best way to find out about a career in sports nutrition is through the practice group, SCAN. On SCAN's website (www.scandpg.org) there is a whole section for students. In the section, you can find career tip sheets, information on the Certified Specialist in Sports Dietetics (CSSD) and ways to get involved in sports. Also, you can find a list of schools with graduate programs (some combining MS degree with internship requirements) that allow you get practice experience in sports dietetics.

Question

I'm very interested in Wellness. I'll be applying to an MPH + DI program after I graduate in May 2008. I've been told that an MPH is highly recommended for work in a Wellness Center. I worked in a Student Wellness Center at a previous school and really enjoyed it. I'm also looking into an MS in Nutrition and Wellness.

Response

My first job out after receiving my MS in nutrition was for a health-promotion consulting firm that specialized in providing wellness programs to corporations. I think that an MPH, especially if you will be working at wellness centers or in community-based wellness programs, is a good fit! Although I am glad I received my MS, I was very interested in a lot of the activities and opportunities our fellow MPH students experienced. Much more "out there" in the community during your training - and a great way to see all the various roles an RD can play under the arm of wellness.

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Question

I am very interested in the nutrition of athletes. I am an endurance runner, so I experience nutrition and fitness in that area everyday. Nutrition is very important in rebuilding and recovery as well as storing the right types of nutrients. I would love to work with runners, or any other endurance sport. What types of careers are available in this area? I am also a vegetarian and continue to discover more and more athletes that are as well. I chose to become a vegetarian for ethical and health purposes, and I feel a lot cleaner now during my endurance performances. Do you see a lot of vegetarians in the sports careers? Is it recommended for some endurance athletes? Thank you so much for your time!

Response

I do work with a few vegetarian athletes, mostly runners. One of my favorite references is a new book by SCAN RD, Enette Larson-Meyer, "Vegetarian Sports Nutrition" (Human Kinetics, 2007). It provides a wealth of information on proper fueling for vegetarian athletes. One thing I have noticed in my work with athletes, especially females, is that vegetarianism can be an excuse for not eating and may be used to cover disordered eating. I always ask the athlete why she is a vegetarian and do a thorough diet history and analysis to look for nutrients that might be in short supply. Vegetarianism can be a very healthy eating pattern for an athlete, but he or she need guidance from an RD to help with food choices.

Question

Hi! I am very interested in sports nutrition. I am graduating in May from Marshall University and applying to their internship in Feb. They do not specialize in sports nutrition but I love the school and do not want to leave. I talked to one of my professors about it and she said that I can finish my internship and masters at MU and then train to become certified in sports nutrition. Can you tell me a little more about where sports dietitians work and what they do? I am interested in eventually working for a College or University Athletic Department after entry level positions. Am I in the right track for what I want to do? Thanks so much for your help and I'm sure I will be back soon with more questions! Thanks!

Response

I think you are on the right track. I would suggest talking to your internship director and find out if there are any opportunities for a short "enrichment" experience in sports nutrition. You might contact the athletic trainer at your school and ask if there is any opportunity to provide team seminars or develop education materials. If nothing exists at the university, try a local high school or track club. Information about becoming a CSSD is available through both SCAN and CDR, so check their websites for more information. You will need to be an RD for a couple of years and gain practice experience before you can take the exam. More and more universities are hiring RD/ CSSD credentialed sports dietitians, but they are often looking for someone with experience. Most of us in SCAN would agree that being a sports dietitian is not an entry-level position. Best wishes.

Question

I'm currently an intern in a dietetic internship and am interested in eating disorders. I know, due to HIPAA, I can't shadow a counseling session with a RD, but I was wondering if you had any ideas or suggestions on how I can get more experience in the field, in the area. Thanks!

Response

I am happy to hear of your interest in the eating disorders field. I am not sure what you have heard about HIPAA, but it does not prevent you as a student from observing patient counseling sessions. Many dietitians who treat patients with eating disorders allow interns, as long as the patient is comfortable, because they understand that this is the best way to train future RDs. I would suggest looking at www.scandpg.org and www.eatright.org for dietitians in

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your area who treat eating disorders. Perhaps one of them would be willing to allow you to sit in for a day, even if it is not part of your official internship curriculum.

I also recommend attending educational workshops for professionals treating eating disorders, such as the SCAN symposium, the Renfrew Center Conference, and others that are CDR-certified for RDs (www.cdrnet.org). You could also contact an eating disorder treatment center in your area to find out if they have a part-time job or volunteer position where you would have the opportunity to interact with staff and patients. These type of opportunities are rarely publicized; you can only get them by showing initiative, and occasionally an opportunity will actually be created if the right person comes along.

Several of my past interns simply contacted me and asked if they could volunteer here, some for class credit, and some just because they wanted the experience. Now we have interns almost year-round, simply because they keep calling. Some of them have chosen Dallas because there was nowhere to get experience in their area, but they had a friend in Dallas where they could stay for free. If you have friends like that in other parts of the country, look into what opportunities may exist in their area as well. Good luck and stick with it. This field is so worthwhile!

To read the entire discussion go to the Student Community of Interest and click on the discussion button on the left. Scroll to the Sports, Cardiovascular and Wellness Nutritionists Discussion folder and click on it to access the entire discussion.

A Special Thank You to ADA Partners

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For more information on these organizations and their commitment to health and wellness, please visit www.eatright.org/corporatesponsors.