

Research and Audit Survey

Introduction

There is a clear expectation that all dietitians should be involved in research and audit activities including audit (HCPC, 2013). It is however acknowledged that the level of research involvement will vary between dietitians. This will range from understanding, interpreting and applying research through to leadership over significant research programmes and research supervision of others (BDA, 2007). There are however reported barriers to dietitians participating in research and audit (Harrison et al., 2001, Gardner et al., 2002) and so overcoming these barriers has the potential to improve engagement of dietitians in research and audit activities. In view of this and in light of PENG’s commitment to promote excellence in nutrition support, enabling the PENG membership to develop and increase research and audit activities is a key strategic goal. With this in mind PENG recently surveyed their membership to:

- Establish the extent to which the PENG membership is currently involved in research and audit
- Identify barriers to engaging in research and audit
- Determine support mechanisms required by the PENG membership to enhance their research and audit skills and practice

Methods

An online survey was developed by PENG committee members and circulated to all PENG members in April 2014. Several reminders were sent over the following weeks to enhance the completion of the survey and data was collected until the end of June 2014.

Results Sixty nine of 396 PENG members completed or partially completed the survey.

Importance of Research and Audit within the role of a Dietitian

PENG members were asked how important research and audit were as a component of the role of the dietitian. All respondents (n=69) agreed or strongly agreed that audit was an important component of the role. Fewer respondents felt research was as important with 87% (n=60) agreeing or strongly agreeing that research was an important component of a dietitian’s role, 12% (n=8) of respondents were unsure and 1% (n=1) felt that research was not important within a dietitian’s role.

Previous and current involvement in research and audit

94% (n=58) of respondents are currently involved in audit and 24% (n=15) are currently involved in research. In the past 97% (n=65) have been involved in audit and 46% (n=31) have been involved in research. Of the research and audit projects which PENG members have been involved in 72% (n=47) of respondents had been the lead. Where the respondent had not been the project lead most frequently another dietitian (n=24) or doctor (n=10) was the project lead. Reasons for not being involved in research include lack of time (n=11), lack of confidence (n=5), lack of critical appraisal skills (n=4) and lack of support (n=4).

Barriers

72% (n=44) of respondents would like to be more involved in research and audit. 64% (n=40) had an idea for a project but had not yet started it. Reasons cited for not starting projects were lack of time (n=37), lack of confidence (n=9) and lack of support (n=8).

Facilitators

Backfill for staffing costs were identified as the most useful financial contribution to assist with research and audit. In addition funding towards Masters fees (n=23) and PhD fees (n=16) would also be useful.

Useful format of support

Suggested formats of support were an individual to contact to ask specific questions (n=43), a study day (n=33) and articles in e-PENlines (n=32)

Dissemination of results of research & audit projects	n
Haven't shared the results:	3
Within dietetic department:	49
Written article for newsletter within the hospital/trust/health board area:	16
Presented poster at a local or regional meeting:	9
Presented poster at a national meeting:	18
Presented poster at an international meeting:	8
Oral presentation at a local or regional meeting:	17
Oral presentation at a national meeting:	10
Oral presentation at an international meeting:	4
Published results in a peer reviewed journal:	6

Support which would be useful to PENG members	n
Help with writing proposals	33
Mentoring system	23
Help with the ethical approval application process	24
Help with development of critical appraisal skills	25
Help with statistical analysis	42
Help with writing for publication	31
Funding to backfill time	54
Funding of equipment	9
More national projects	1
More help from professional body	1

Discussion

It is evident that many PENG members are involved in research and audit activities and an overwhelming majority feel that these activities are important within the role of the dietitian. These results are in contrast to results from a previous UK study which found that only 15% of dietitians were involved in research and 65% were involved in audit (Harrison et al., 2001). Developing these research and audit activities across the membership as a whole has the potential to enhance the evidence base for dietetic practice in areas of nutrition support. PENG are committed to this and this survey forms the basis of future work in this area.

References
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