

# Dietitians in Home Care

## Better Health • Better Care • Better Value



### Dietitians: an important role on the home care team

Dietitians working in home care use their skills, professional knowledge, expertise and a client-centred approach to: optimize client nutrition intake; individualize food intake to meet specific nutrition, dietary and/or functional needs; promote overall health and well-being; and encourage the maintenance of client independence.

### Dietitians work with a variety of partners

Dietitians work closely with home care provider teams and community partners to:

- Assess individual nutritional needs
- Develop treatment/nutrition care plans and individualized therapeutic diet prescriptions
- Counsel and support clients, families and caregivers by teaching nutrition principles and strategies to meet individual needs
- Evaluate outcomes related to the overall care plan goals
- Recommend (as needed) appropriate use of oral nutrition supplements; enteral/parenteral feeding solutions, schedules & equipment
- Manage risk and potential complications in enteral/parenteral feeding complications
- Address issues of food access and food security, finances, meal planning, and food preparation, storage and handling
- Assess nutrient or diet/drug interactions, and counsel to minimize related adverse implications
- Consult with the health care team to support integrated team care
- Connect clients with nutrition-related community services, supports and resources

### The Facts and the \$2 billion problem

- Most Canadians would prefer to remain in their homes and live as independently as possible. **Dietitians can help!**
- Home care saves health system dollars.
- Access to dietitian services through the home care system is inconsistent across Canada — and almost non-existent in some provinces.
- Seniors makeup the majority of home care clients—the average age of home care clients in Canada is 78 years. Comprehensive home care services including dietitians, are needed to address the aging population.
- **Malnutrition is a \$2 billion problem in Canadian hospitals:**
  - *Malnutrition is linked to longer hospital stays and increased risk of readmission.*
  - *A malnourished patient's cost of care is approximately \$2000 more than a well-nourished patient's care.*
  - *Malnutrition is associated with increased morbidity in acute and chronic diseases, including development of pressure ulcers, poor wound healing, increased risk of falls and increased risk of infection —preventing and treating malnutrition in the community can reduce these costs.*
- Home-based primary care interventions, including interprofessional teams with dietitians, reduce hospital and long term care admissions and decrease emergency department visits.
- Direct costs associated with falls among seniors in Canada are over \$2 billion — nutrition interventions decrease risk of falls and complications.
- An example of dietitians' value; a dietitian-led enteral support home care clinic resulted in savings of over \$6000/client.