



**STUDYDADDY**

**Get Homework Help  
From Expert Tutor**

**Get Help**



## Ethical Issues for Students

**E**THICAL ISSUES, SUCH AS DIS-honesty, plagiarism, and confidentiality, are regularly faced by nutrition/dietetics students as well as by their professors and preceptors. The Code of Ethics for the Profession of Dietetics provides a roadmap to evaluate ethical situations that occur, and applies to student members of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (Academy) as well as to practitioners.<sup>1</sup> In addition to the Code of Ethics, students must also be aware of the integrity policies at their schools as well as the privacy policies (The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 [HIPAA]) of the organizations in which they are placed for practice. As social media proliferates, issues arise that provide students and practitioners additional opportunities to consider their professional code of ethics.

Dietetics students and dietetics interns are exposed to the Code of Ethics for the Profession of Dietetics as a requirement of all programs accredited by the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics.<sup>2</sup> It has been found that ethical behaviors demonstrated as a student correlate with later behaviors as a professional.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, it is critical that dietetics students understand the Code of Ethics and its relevance to them.

*This article was written by **Nadine Braunstein, PhD, RD, LD**, assistant professor and the Allied Health Program Director at Towson University, Towson, MD.*

doi: 10.1016/j.jand.2012.06.017

Meets Learning Need Codes 1000, 1050, 1090, and 1140. To take the Continuing Professional Education quiz for this article, log in to [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org), click the "MyProfile" link under your name at the top of the homepage, select "Journal Quiz" from the menu on your myAcademy page, click "Journal Article Quiz" on the next page, and then click the "Additional Journal CPE Articles" button to view a list of available quizzes, from which you may select the quiz for this article.

Health professions students in other health disciplines learn about their codes of ethics and how to apply them to clinical practice. One study of 214 Finnish nursing students found that they learned about confidentiality, impartiality, and developing professional competence, and that 56% felt that ethical concepts were covered extensively in their training.<sup>4</sup> Yet students rated knowledge of their professional code of ethics and their skill in being able to apply the code in practice as only "average" on a Likert scale.

Most students regularly participate in some form of social media. Professors must address dilemmas such as how to handle "friend" requests from their students.<sup>5</sup> Even in training, students need to remember to portray a professional image on social media platforms. Also, students must realize that information shared on social media about colleagues, preceptors, and patients might be considered confidential in nature and subject to the professional code of ethics, school integrity guidelines, and/or HIPAA rules.

Four brief scenarios follow demonstrating situations nutrition and dietetics students may experience that can be evaluated using the Code of Ethics for the Profession of Dietetics.

### SCENARIO 1—REQUESTING THE USE OF A CLASSMATE'S MEMBER NUMBER AND PASSWORD

Susan is enrolled in a medical nutrition therapy course and has an assignment that would be easier to complete if she used the Evidence Analysis Library. Trying to save money, Susan did not become a student member of the Academy. She asks her fellow students if they would share their member number and log-in password to complete the class assignment.

#### Ethical Issue

Because Susan is not a member of the Academy she is not bound by the Academy/Commission on Dietetic Registration Code of Ethics with regard to her

conduct. However, her classmates and professors, who are members, would need to consider Principle 1 of the Code: "The dietetics practitioner conducts himself/herself with honesty, integrity, and fairness."<sup>1</sup> Giving a member number and password to a student who chose not to join the Academy would be considered a dishonest act.

### SCENARIO 2—ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Paul is a student member of the Academy. He attends a college that has an academic integrity policy. He needs to get a high grade on an examination to complete a required course for his internship application. Paul was observed during this examination using a smart phone in his lap to access equations and definitions that were to have been memorized.

#### Ethical Issue

Similar to the first scenario, Principle 1 in the Code of Ethics has been breached.<sup>1</sup> Because this college has an academic integrity policy, Paul and his professor will need to follow the procedures established in the course syllabus and by the school for handling this cheating incident. The outcomes could range from a discussion with the professor, failing an examination, attending a cheating program, or even dismissal from the major. It is important for students to be aware of their school's academic integrity policies, procedures, and consequences. Some health care academic programs have stricter cheating policies than the school because the potential for harm to patients as a result of student cheating could be a matter of life and death.

### SCENARIO 3—PLAGIARISM

Loren is preparing a case study for a paper and oral presentation that are due tomorrow. Feeling under time pressure, Loren copied some information from a few websites and journal articles and included them in the paper and PowerPoint without attribution. Lo-

ren's professor recognized these passages as being plagiarized, and contacted the student about this serious infraction.

### Ethical Issue

Plagiarism is defined as "presenting work, products, ideas, words, or data of another as one's own."<sup>6</sup> It is possible that Loren did not know that copying the information was plagiarism. However, the guidelines will undoubtedly have been reviewed in several of Loren's classes. Loren's professor will most likely review the consequences of plagiarism using the school's academic integrity policy, taking action accordingly. In addition, examining Principle 1 of the Code of Ethics<sup>1</sup> would indicate that Loren had not "conducted himself/herself with honesty [or] integrity."

### SCENARIO 4—PROFESSIONALISM ON FACEBOOK

Jerry is a dietetics intern doing a clinical rotation at a large metropolitan medical center. Recently the parent of a terminally ill oncology patient sent Jerry a Facebook "friend" request that was accepted. This parent was distraught when she found the intern had included private information about other patients, dietetics interns, and preceptors on the Facebook page. The parent met with the internship director to discuss her concerns.

### Ethical Issues

Social media provides new opportunities for students and professionals to apply the Code of Ethics. There are several issues in this scenario. First, it would be important to determine whether "friending" the parent of a patient on Facebook is considered professionally appropriate by reviewing policies of both the internship and the hospital.

Second, the actual content of the information posted on Facebook would need to be evaluated to determine whether confidentiality had been compromised. Principle 10 in the Code states, "The dietetics practitioner protects confidential information and makes full disclosure about any limitation on his or her ability to guarantee full confidentiality."<sup>1</sup> If the intern had been an employee of the hospital, re-

vealing confidential patient information could be grounds for dismissal. Therefore, students and interns doing placements must also be knowledgeable about what information that is posted using social media is considered confidential as well as the confidentiality policies at the organizations where training occurs.

### CONCLUSION

Student members of the Academy must remember that they are held to the same Code of Ethics as all member categories. In addition, students need to follow the integrity and confidentiality policies of their schools and their placement organizations. Because students are emerging professionals it is essential to practice the ethical behaviors that will be expected when they enter the workforce.

### References

1. Edge M, Fornari A, Bittle C, et al. American Dietetic Association/Commission on Dietetic Registration Code of Ethics for the profession of dietetics and process for consideration of ethics Issues. *J Am Diet Assoc.* 2009;109(8):1461-1467.
2. Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards of the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND). <http://www.eatright.org/CADE/content.aspx?id=57>. Accessed January 2, 2012
3. Langone M. Promoting integrity among nursing students. *J Nursing Educ.* 2009;46(1):45-47.
4. Numminen OH, Leino-Kilpi H, van der Arden A and Katajisto J. Nursing students and teaching of codes of ethics: An empirical research study. *Intl Nurs Rev.* 2009;56(4):483-490.
5. Aase, S. Toward E-professionalism: Thinking through the implications of navigating the digital world. *J Am Diet Assoc.* 2010; 110(10):1442-1449.
6. Towson University Division of Academic Affairs. Student Academic Integrity Policy. <http://www.new.towson.edu/provost/resources/studentacademic.asp>. Accessed February 23, 2012.



**STUDYDADDY**

**Get Homework Help  
From Expert Tutor**

**Get Help**