



RDPG Member Spotlight: Anna Parker DCN, RD, CDE, CCRC

Anna Parker DCN, RD, CDE, CCRC is a Clinical Research Team Leader at Anaheim Clinical Trials in Anaheim, CA. In this position, she leads the diabetes research team in the planning, coordination, communication and implementation of diabetes clinical trials. In addition, she trains clinical research coordinators and assistants on study protocols; recruits, enrolls and maintains study subjects; and participates in audits and reviews of study protocols. She also provides dietary support for pharmaceutical trials by developing individualized menus to align with study protocols.

Dr. Parker, please tell us about your background. How did you get to where you are now?

I attended the Dominican University in River Forest, Illinois for my undergraduate degree in Foods and Nutrition. Upon graduation, I obtained a Masters of Science in Clinical Nutrition (MSCN) from Rutgers University (previously University of Medicine and Dentistry New Jersey) in 2007 and a Doctorate in Clinical Nutrition (DCN) in 2011. I have maintained certification in research (CCRC) since 2005 and certification as a diabetes educator (CDE) since 2002.

Could you please summarize your current research for us?

I am currently conducting studies for pharmaceutical companies in the area of Type 2 diabetes and obesity. I coordinate the trials as well as provide the dietary support. I have worked on clinical trials including basal and bolus insulin, GLP-1 receptor agonists, DPP-4 inhibitors and SGLT-2 inhibitors. As a study coordinator, I review the clinical trial with potential subjects while assessing them for their eligibility. Once the patient is randomized into a clinical trial, I conduct the study

visits according to the protocol managing their care with the Principal Investigator. As a CDE, I educate research subjects on carbohydrate counting and healthy diets to help them manage their diabetes.

How did you become involved/interested in your current line of research?

I was approached by one of the Principal Investigators to provide dietary support for a cholesterol trial. I found I was passionate about research and requested to train as a clinical research coordinator. In this position I was able to combine roles as an RDN/CRC and also obtained my phlebotomy license. My interest in research inspired me to obtain my graduate degree at Rutgers University online program to receive a MSCN and DCN while working full time in research. My DCN research project was in prediabetes, and my employer supported my efforts to conduct a randomized clinical trial at Anaheim Clinical Trials. Eighty-one participants were randomized into the trial and participated in the 12-week study comparing medical nutrition therapy (MNT) with standard care. The results demonstrated that individualized MNT combined with standard care is more effective in decreasing HbA1c levels in patients diagnosed with prediabetes as compared to standard care alone.

The results of this trial were published in the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics* in 2014 and resulted in the DCE publication award and the Huddleson Award from the Academy.

Dr. Parker, what advice would you give to a young researcher for developing a successful line of research?

There is a need for RDs to be involved with pharmaceutical research. With our unique training and expertise, we make

excellent research coordinators. I would recommend using an evidence-based approach to answer a clinical question. The Academy's Evidence Analysis Manual is a great tool to accompany research. It outlines the steps of the evidence analysis process while reviewing different types of study designs. It is a good place to begin and is essential for the young researcher to understand.

What are your career goals?

I am also an adjunct professor at Rutgers University in the on-line graduate school and would like to become a full-time professor assisting students with clinical research.

How has your affiliation with the Academy impacted your career progression?

As an academy and Diabetes Care and Education DPG (DCE) member, I was awarded the DCE DPG Karen Goldstein Memorial Grant for Diabetes MNT in 2010 for \$ 20,000. This provided the funds to conduct the randomized controlled clinical trial in prediabetes. The academy has been a great support in this research.

I have also served as research chair for the DCE from 2016-2018, volunteering my time to review student research requests and study protocol submissions for the Karen Goldstein Memorial Grant. I am also serving on a committee to develop a certificate of training in diabetes with the Academy.

If someone were to ask you to explain why research is important to the field of dietetics, what would you say?

We need to continue to show that dietetics improves patients' lives. We need the research to justify how diet impacts health. As RDNs, it is up to us to conduct the research in order to change health care benefits for our patients.