

The Genesis and History of NEHP: One Member's View

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Dietetic Practice Groups (DPGs) have a history that goes as far back to 1918 when the first ADA Annual Meeting was held. The Association formed four sections at that first meeting that included one labeled “**Teaching**”. Our NEHP members who can envision being at that 1918 meeting would have found themselves networking as members of that section to rename themselves and establish the education section so as to specifically provide a network for educators.

In 1971, almost 53 years later, ADA recognized a growing diversity of interest and practices within the profession and sought to provide a framework to further facilitate member networking opportunities. The label of **Special Interest Groups (SIGs)** evolved to define 10 groups of ADA members who were already networking on their own based on their common areas of practice.¹ A change in the 1977 bylaws established the Council on Practice (COP) and the SIGs were renamed **Dietetic Practice Groups (DPGs)**. Five divisions within COP, including Education and Research, were identified to continue the work of the SIGs while providing and defining information relative to their specialty areas, communication among members, planning Annual Meetings sessions for interest groups, and contributing to ADA's program of work. Additional responsibilities grew to include support of continuing education activity, development of quality assurance standards, encouragement of public education activities, and utilization of applied research.

In 1977-78, a total of 13 special interest groups completed formal petitions with signatures of at least 50 members within each group to establish a DPG. Two SIGs, **Teaching Dietitians in Medical Schools** and **Teaching Nutrition in Nursing Schools**, were included in the 13 groups and became the **Dietitians in Medical and Dental Education** and **Nutritionists in Nursing Education Dietetic Practice Groups**.¹ I was a petitioner in each of those groups. Pioneers in the creation of Nutrition Curriculum for Medical, Dental and Nursing Schools, including names such as Jane White, PhD, RD; Ellse Carson, RD; Anita Lasswell, PhD, RD; Nancie Merlino, PhD, RD; Margaret Garner, PhD, RD; and Eleanor Ann Young, PhD, RD provided leadership and direction to its members and sought opportunities to collaborate in projects designed to make nutrition an integral part of medical, nursing and dental research and practice. See TABLE 1 for a list of names of those who have chaired these respective groups that were later merged. They were often the only nutrition professional in their respective academic or practice environments and found the DPG a source of energy. But more importantly, they sought to position the Registered Dietitian as the expert with the credentials to teach nutrition to other health professionals. At the time, popular nutrition fads, quackery and fiction were rampant. Not only what was being taught but by whom, was a concern of our profession. Today our members face different challenges in addressing how to filter and interpret the available nutrition information that surrounds us daily.

As a member of both DPGs, I was aware of the distinct similarities in their purpose. In many cases we were involved in teaching not only future and practicing nursing, dental, and medical health care professionals but other allied health professionals as well. Many of us were called to plan and provide continuing education programs for health care professionals. Therefore, in 1990 when the two groups merged to form the **Nutrition Educators of Health Professionals (NEHP)**, it was a natural progression that strengthened communication and the mission of both groups. (See Table 1 for names of past chairs of NEHP) No other practice group could provide the unique educational focus NEHP provides. This group is challenged with bringing the

science of nutrition into another realm....that is to view it from another health professionals unique perch in the land of health care providers. Over the past 20 years this group has had the support of the food and beverage industry and other health professional associations and organizations because this DPG bridges chasms among health professionals. They not only develop content for education but have the challenge of delivering it as one lone educator in a diverse health care environment that includes providers, administrators, students, residents, and patients or subjects of research protocols. NEHP provides a village for those who are alone in their practice areas. The members of this group have represented the profession in national and international forums as the nutrition experts in research, practice, public policy, industry and health promotion events leading to improved health in this nation. They have fostered the role of the registered dietitian as a key member of the academic community responsible for nutrition education across all health professional disciplines. The newsletter has served as a vehicle for communication and annual meeting programs have provided continuing education not only for NEHP members, but bolstered the role and synergy of other ADA members as nutrition educators in their respective practice areas. The opportunity to interface with all media and to publish opinions as well as nutrition science has evolved from the networking within this practice group.

The history of this practice group lives in those who founded it and in those who continue to nurture the mission of NEHP. We are a small but important group. As Kathy Kolasa, PhD, RD, LDN, a former NEHP chair once said, "we serve a very important constituency for the American Dietetic Association. We serve key groups in health care that are instrumental in helping us to position nutrition in a place of prominence. I welcome the members of NEHP to continue the legacy of this group into the future."

TABLE 1. Chairs of former practice groups and NEHP .

Dietitians in Medical and Dental Education (formerly Teaching Dietitians in Medical School))

Elizabeth D. Munves, PhD, RD	1978-80
Constance J. Geiger, PhD, RD	1980-82
Hilarie (Hoting) Jacobs, MS, RD	1982-84
Jane V. White, PhD, RD	1984-86
Anita B. Lasswell, PhD, RD	1986-88
Margaret P. Garner PhD, RD	1988-89
Eleanor A. Young PhD, RD	1989-90

Nutritionists in Nursing Education (formerly Teaching Nutrition in Nursing Schools)

Ellse Carson, RD	1977-78
Jo Anne S. Kelly, RD	1978-80
Patricia A. McKnight, RD	1980-81
Mary E. Cameron, RD	1981-82
Karen Garner Hauersperger, RD	1982-83
Patsy Lee Shulko, RD	1983-84
Jeanne R. Rackow, RD	1984-85
Eileen K Nee, RD	1985-86
Lael T. Cutler, RD	1986-87
Marcia C. Costello, MS, RD	1987-88
Janet Z. Burson, EdD, RD, LD	1988-89
Nancie S. Merlino, PhD, RD	1989-90

NUTRITION EDUCATORS OF HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Nancie S. Merlino, PhD, RD	1990-91
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Eleanor A. Young, PhD, RD	1991-92
Kathryn M. Kolasa, PhD, RD, LDN	1992-93
Marcia C. Costello, MS, RD	1993-94
Mary L. Dundas, PhD, RD, LDN	1994-96
Lisa A. Hark, MS, RD	1996-97
Connie Mobley, PhD, RD	1997-98
Riva Touger-Decker, PhD, RD, FADA	1998-99
Glenda N. Lindseth, PhD, RD, FADA	1999-00
Cynthia Thompson, PhD, RD	2000-01
Kathleen M. Rourke, RD	2001-02
Roger Shewmake, PhD, RD	2002-03
JoAnn S. Carson, PhD, RD	2003-04
Katherine Chauncey, PhD, RD, FADA	2004-05
Cynthia Stegeman, MED, RD, LD, CDE, RDH	2005-06
Sylvia Moore, PhD, RD, FADA	2006-07
Cynthia P. Cadieux, PhD, RD	2007-08
Teresa A. Marshall, PhD, RD	2008-09
Lona Sandon, MEd, RD, LD	2009-10
Sue Cunningham, PhD, RD, LD, CDE	2010-11
Teresa C. Carithers, PhD, RD, LD	2011-12
Added after publication:	
Teresa Johnson, DCN, RD, LD	2012-13
Tammy Stephenson, PhD, RD	2013-14
Elizabeth Eilender, MS, RD, CDN	2014-15

References

1. American Dietetic Association. History of Council on Practice and Dietary Practice Groups. ADA Practice Manager Manual. Date unknown.