

Student Corner . . .

The Value and Skills Students Bring to BHN

By Caroline Yoder

Joining a dietetic practice group (DPG) is a great way for nutrition and dietetics students to become familiar with specific subsets of the field that pertain to their particular interests. Here at BHN, we are fortunate to have many student members, and we welcome them to participate in all the group's activities.

Student members might feel that they can't get involved in the DPG, perhaps due to limited experience in nutrition or lack of the RD certification. The fact of the matter is that students offer a vast array of unique skills and insights that benefit BHN.

Technological Know-How

One such skill is students' familiarity with technology. A 2010 study estimates that a staggering 98% of college students own a computer, and about 95% have used social networking sites (1). Moreover, a growing number of students write personal or professional blogs. In an increasingly digital age, this comfort with using the Internet and with trying new technologies will not only benefit students' future careers, but also present opportunities for them to interact with and contribute to BHN.

Personal Understanding of Mental Health

The current student cohort also shares the experience of better understanding of psychological disorders. The public awareness of autism disorders has increased in recent years, in conjunction with the spike in diagnosed autism cases. California, for example, saw a 634% increase in the number of autism cases between 1987 and 2003 (2). Similarly, the incidence of eating disorders has increased among the adolescent age group in past few decades (3). With these trends in diagnosis, students of today are more likely to have an understanding of mental illness, perhaps from personal experience, from knowing someone with these conditions, or even just from living in an age when mental health became a greater part of the public consciousness.

The Future of Our Profession

The final and perhaps most important characteristic that students in BHN share is that they are the future of our profession; they will shape the future of dietetics. Most current students are considered to be part of the Millennial Generation, that is, they were born after 1980. Research has just begun to identify the unique qualities of this age group, but preliminary findings indicate that, in general, members of the Millennial Generation aim to gain new skills and seek rapid advancement within their chosen career paths, while still maintaining realistic job expectations (4). These attributes, in addition to those yet to be revealed, will make for a generation of high-achieving and effective dietetic professionals.

References

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