

Abstract

The objective of this bachelor thesis was to obtain a comprehensive view on nutrition counselling and confirm or disprove the need to regulate the profession of nutrition consultants.

The theoretical part of the thesis explains the relationship of obesity and its comorbidities, confirms the high prevalence of comorbidities as documented by several major studies conducted on large populations, and analyses the relevant legal norms dealing with the conditions on performing a nutrition counselling.

As part of this thesis a primary research was conducted, carried out as anonymous survey with patients of Obesity Centre, 3rd Medical Department, 1st Faculty of Medicine Charles University and General Faculty Hospital in Prague, with clients of Recondition Centre VŠTJ Medicina Prague and clients of commercial providers of nutrition counselling. This survey confirmed that knowledge of general nutrition recommendations is satisfactory among respondents, but they tend not to follow the recommendations.

The research pointed out clients' high confidence in nutrition consultants. More than three quarters of respondents in both groups labelled weight reduction as the most distinctive service of nutritional consultants. Over 1/3 of respondents said helping patients with chronic diseases as one of the typical services of nutrition consultants. The survey confirmed the prevalence of obesity comorbidities in both groups. The prevalence of comorbidities increases proportionately with BMI and age of patients.

Method of Mystery shopping has been used in order to determine how nutrition consultants work with clients. Its form - Mystery e-mail confirmed the professional approach of nutrition consultants when acquiring clients. However, none of the 75 consultants responding client's mystery e-mail did warn her, that she should discuss the proposed reduction regime with her doctor due to comorbidities stated in her e-mail. More than 50 % of the Mystery e-mail respondents even actively offered services to patients with comorbidities on their websites.

Personal visits done as part of the Mystery shopping allowed to gain insights about nutrition consultants working methods. Health and nutritional anamnesis was overwhelmingly performed without serious misconduct. 8 out of 10 consultants asked about the specific metabolic diseases. The most neglected part of the anamnesis is the important area of psychosocial problems. Body detoxification or de-acidification has been recommended as a first step in weight reduction by majority of nutrition consultants. Nevertheless, none of the visited consultants explained the principle of these procedures in a professionally relevant manner. Consultants with healthcare education or university education in nutrition related fields, succeeded best.

As a result of the survey and Mystery shopping study outcomes, the efforts to regulate activities in nutrition counselling can be strongly recommended.

Key words:

obesity comorbidity, nutrition counselling, healthcare education, dietician, nutrition consultant