



What is the difference between a Registered Clinical Nutritionist, a Registered Nutritionist, a Dietician and someone who says they are a nutritionist?

Registered clinical nutritionists

The title of registered clinical nutritionist (RCN) can only be used by practitioners who meet the standards determined by the Clinical Nutrition Association of New Zealand (CNA).

RCNs must have an NZQA approved academic qualification in nutrition to level 6 or above, which includes courses in nutrition, anatomy and physiology, pathophysiology, biochemistry, research, clinical practice and holistic practice. The qualification must include 2400 notional hours or more, equivalent to two years full time study. In addition, an RCN also needs to have had formal clinical training which covers health history assessment, consultation skills, clinical examination, nutritional assessment, contraindications, appropriate functional and diagnostic testing, developing health plans, plus at least 300 hours clinical practice covering a varied scope of practice.

RCNs often work in private practice and/or in a corporate setting and provide evidence-based nutrition advice within a holistic worldview, personalised health assessments and lifestyle interventions to support health, wellbeing and performance. RCNs must adhere to the CNA's code of ethics and rules of practice and must meet annual criteria for continuing professional education.

Registered nutritionists

The title of registered nutritionist in New Zealand can only be used by those who meet the standards determined by The Nutrition Society of New Zealand. Registered nutritionists must hold a degree or academic qualification from a university or other recognised national institution of education. In addition to their basic academic qualification, they must have two to three years of professional experience in the field of nutrition.

A key difference between an RCN and a registered nutritionist is the CNA's requirement for formal clinical training (explained above) and evidence of providing a holistic practice.

Nutritionists

Nutritionists aim to improve the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities through better nutrition. Most nutritionists in New Zealand have usually completed some form of training, either a degree or diploma in nutrition or related science, and ideally have tertiary training in science, nutrition, biochemistry, and medicine or sports physiology from a reputable

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tertiary institution.

However there is no formal criteria in New Zealand governing use of the title 'nutritionist', therefore some people who claim to be nutritionists may not be adequately qualified, and checking for registration with a reputable New Zealand association is advisable.

Dietitians

A dietitian in New Zealand is a registered health professional who meets standards of the New Zealand Dietitians Board under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003, and who has an accredited undergraduate science degree in nutrition, and a postgraduate qualification in dietetics.

Dietitians are trained in the science of nutrition and diet therapy and are qualified to work in areas that require nutritional assessment and counseling. A key difference between an RCN and a dietitian is the CNA's requirement for formal clinical training (explained above) and evidence of providing a holistic practice.

References

www.nutritionists.org.nz/become-a-member/practitioner-membership-mb
www.nutritionistsociety.ac.nz/registration