

# INCORPORATING 2022 COMPETENCY FOR THE REGISTERED DIETITIAN NUTRITION, 3.6 INTO A NUTRITION SKILLS LAB: IMPACT ON STUDENTS KNOWLEDGE AND COMPETENCE LEVELS



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## Abstract

Since the development of new accreditation standards by the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND) became effective June 1, 2022, nutrition educators have the task of ensuring new curriculum and learning activities are incorporated into their programs. Standard 3.6, "Conduct a swallow screen and refer to the appropriate health care professional for full swallow evaluation when needed", is a new competency based on recent additions to the Standards of Practice in Nutrition Care, resulting in limited research being available to nutrition educators on this practice. The purpose of this project was to create a nutrition skills lab where Dietetic Internship (DI) students participated in a both a lecture and a lab, in conjunction with the assistance of a Speech Language Pathologist (SLP), to measure a perceived increase in knowledge of the subject matter and competence in demonstrating the actual competency. The students were assisted by the lab instructor and SLP to learn how to properly screen patients with swallowing difficulty and determine if the patient was appropriate to continue with the DI student conducting the screening or if the patient needed to be referred to an SLP. Following the lab, students provided qualitative feedback on their experience, which indicated that what they practiced in the simulation would better prepare them for their clinical rotations. The institution of this nutrition skills lab may prove beneficial to other nutrition educators who are seeking to adopt methods to incorporate this new competency into their curriculum.

## Objective

After completion of the lab, DI students will be able to recognize patients at high risk for swallowing difficulties, then to identify signs and symptoms which warrant a safe swallow screen, indications for a modified diet, or indications for referral to a Speech Language Pathologist for further evaluation when beyond the scope of the RD practice.

## Methods

Table 1: Lesson Plan

Task	Location	Resources needed	Time allotted
SLP talk; review of high risk patients, indications vs contraindications, review decision making tree; watch video of MBSS	Debrief 1	AV equipment	30 minutes
Students practice thickening liquids to honey, nectar, and pudding consistency	ADL kitchen	Water, cups, spoons, napkins, thickener	20 minutes
Students watch SLP perform swallow screen(s) on SP	Sim 4	Standardized patient, water, applesauce, graham cracker, ice chips, cups, spoons, napkins	15 minutes
Students practice performing swallow screen(s) on SP -6 students/screens -SP can mimic progression from passing swallow screen to failing swallow screen	Sim 4	Standardized patient, water, applesauce, graham cracker, ice chips, cups, spoons, napkins	45 minutes
Each student is presented with a different case presentation; determines need for swallow screen; refers to SLP when needed	Sim 4	Standardized patient, water, applesauce, graham cracker, ice chips, cups, spoons, napkins	60 minutes



Figure 1. DI student interacts with a standardized patient during the swallowing lab while other students observe.

## Methods (cont'd)

Table 2. Evaluation Rubric

FranU Master of Science in Nutritional Sciences Program Critical Thinking and Decision Making Skills NUTR 5205L: Swallow Screen Lab				
Student's Name/Date:	Instructor:			
US=Unsatisfactory: poor, does not meet expectations N=Novice: fair, requires assistance and improvement in lab skills AB=Advanced Beginner: good, competent, demonstrates effective lab skills				
Skill	Did not perform Opts	US 1pt	N 2pts	AB 3pts
Identifies patients at high risk for dysphagia (worksheet)				
Student is able to verbalize indications and contraindications for swallow evaluation (worksheet)				
Student is able to describe common swallow screen protocols (worksheet)				
Student is able to demonstrate the skill of thickening liquids to the proper consistency (lab skill)				
Student is able to apply critical thinking skills to determine appropriateness of swallow evaluation (simulation)				
CRDN 3.6 Student is able to adequately conduct a swallow screen (simulation)				
Student is able to apply decision making skills to determine appropriateness of initiating/continuing a swallow screen (simulation)				
CRDN 2.6 Student is able to refer patient to the appropriate health care professional for full swallow evaluation when needed (simulation)				
Comments: Speech language pathologist assisted with this lab				

## Results

All DI Students were given a score of Advanced Beginner (AB) on the above rubric line item, "CRDN 3.6: Student is able to adequately conduct a swallow screen (simulation)."

"My sister is a graduate student in Speech Pathology and was impressed at how well I understood the Yale Swallow Protocol. I feel I will be better prepared for my clinical rotation based on this exposure." Dietetic Internship Student Beau Landry

"The swallow lab was beneficial for my clinical rotation. I had to opportunity to witness two Modified Barium Swallows (MBS) and I had the background knowledge regarding patients who were appropriate and not appropriate for bedside swallow evaluations." Dietetic Internship Student Desiree Kern



Figure 2. Joel Fruchtnicht, SLP, instructs the DI students on how to properly sample a nectar thick liquid

## Discussion

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and American Society for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition: Revised 2021 Standards of Practice and Standards of Professional Performance for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (Competent, Proficient, and Expert) in Nutrition Support states that the RDN at proficient or expert level of practice may evaluate need for a modified barium swallow study (SOP 1.3B) and then make a referral to a speech language pathologist following the organization's process (SOP 3.9B). The RDN collaborates with the interprofessional team members (e.g., physical, occupational, speech therapy; social services; psychology; or dental services) to facilitate referrals to optimize nutrition care as indicated (SOPP 3.2B1). The Revised 2017 Scope of Practice for the RDN supports the RDN's assessment of a patient's nutritional status working closely with interprofessional team members (e.g., ability to swallow, in the care of patients with dysphagia with the Speech Language Pathologist).

## Conclusion

The lab enabled DI students to list which patients were good candidates for a swallow screen by a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN) and which should be referred for a full swallow evaluation. Nutrition simulation and skills labs can provide opportunities for students to practice required skills in a safe, non-clinical, environment to better prepare them for clinical rotations and practice

## References

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