

Io sono una Dietista!

I am a Dietitian!

The history of Dietitians in Italy is, in great measure, the history of our National Association, the Italian Association of Dietitians (ANDID), which was born in 1985. Also my professional history is closely related to ANDID.

Actually I live in Rome, but I was born in Naples, where I began my studies as a Dietitian in 1994, when the first University Courses for Dietitians were established in Italy. Before 1994, there were secondary or regional schools, and there was not a unique training for Dietitians. After a long fight, ANDID obtained - together with the other Health Professions National Associations - University Courses as the unique training for all the Health Professions, and then also for Dietitians, all over Italy.

I took my Bachelor's Degree at the University of Naples, Federico II, in 1997, and from that date...how times have changed!

Dietitians in Italy have a Professional Profile since 1994, recognized with an Act of the Minister of Health, in which are stated all their areas and professional activities. According to the EFAD Guidelines, ANDID released, on its 10th Birthday ANDID (1995), the Code of Ethics for Dietitians, a document which every ANDID member has to refer to, and which is now under revision, for an update.

In 2000 there were established in Italy post-graduate courses for Dietitians, master's degree and Ph.D. This post-graduate training allows dietitians to teach at a University level and to coordinate Health Professions Services within the National Health System. In 2007, I took my Ph.D in Human Nutrition, at University Federico II in Naples.

Our specific professional acts cover clinical nutrition, food safety, public health nutrition, community nutrition, teaching: we work as employed in National Health System, private care or industry, or as freelancer.

The "classical" work field of Dietitian in Italy is the clinical setting, but in the last decades we had a very important improvement of Dietitians working in Public Health, Foodservices and Food industries. Research is still a field known by few, but there is a growing interest both from professionals and from the Association, which wish to implement training course and meeting on this topic.

ANDID did a lot of work to promote the professional profile of Dietitians, with the elaboration of Professional Position Papers on the topics where a fundamental, non replaceable, role for the dietitian has been documented by the best available scientific evidence, with reference to high quality studies performed by dietitians or by working-groups involving dietitians.

Today the work of Dietitians in Italy is very well known and appreciated by physicians, health professionals, food services and industries and also by our National and Local institutions.

When I attended my course, the role of Dietitians was not still clear, it was not clear if a Dietitian was "a little doctor, with competences in nutrition" or who knows...However, I was very happy of what I was learning and what I could do after my degree. And now, after more than ten years (time goes by!) I am very happy and proud thinking at all the interesting experiences I did and actually I am doing. I worked in Clinical Nutrition (Artificial Nutrition and Obesity), in Public Health (Nutritional epidemiology, food safety and nutrition) and I also teach at University Courses for Dietitians and other Health Professionals. Actually I am continuing to work in the Public Health field, working as a freelancer, and I am just now beginning to collaborate with a Scientific Journal dealing with Food and Nutrition.

Since the last year, I am a member of ANDID Executive Board, and I am the Editor in Chief of ANDID Journal from 2004. This is my "biggest love": our journal is the way to talk "with and to" all the Dietitians in Italy and to disseminate our activities and all the news relevant to our members.

In 2006, ANDID decided to collaborate actively with DIETS, and I had the pleasure to be a member of DIETS as an ANDID representative. This experience has been for me very interesting and exciting: working together with colleagues from other countries, be part of a great network of Dietitians, the first European Network for Dietitians, is very exciting...Among other things, is the reason why I had the opportunity to write on the pages of your journal!

Ersilia Troiano
Italy