

**Sou Dietista!
I am dietitian!**

I'm a dietitian from Portugal. I have graduated in Higher School of Health Technology in Lisbon, in 1989, so I've made my professional 20 anniversary this July. I've a master in Clinical nutrition and I'm still working on my PHD.

I've worked in a central Children's Hospital for 14 years, and now I'm a teacher of Dietetics in my Higher School. My school was the representative of Portugal on DIETS, where I'm a NMG member.

The oldest reference to a nutrition and dietetic profession in Portugal dates from 1938, in a document from civilian hospitals which refers to clinical dietitians (milk dietitian). In Portugal the dietitian has a degree in dietetics with a diploma, officially recognised, and also must have a professional registration attested by the Ministry of Health. The competencies of dietitians are defined as the application of knowledge in nutrition and dietetics in general health and education of individuals/groups, in situations of health or illness. The dietitian acts in the domain of promoting health and treatments and also in management of food resources. We are approximately 800 dietitians, but still few for our 10 million inhabitants. Most of us work in clinical (hospitals) and in food catering, but now a new field for dietitians is emerging in community services (homes, children schools and companies). Some major hospitals have around 20 dietitians while others smaller have only one or two.

Dietetics can be minister in private or official schools; it had 240 ECTS (8 semesters) and corresponds to a bachelor degree. According to a new law the higher schools teachers must have a PhD degree, so the ones that still don't have a PhD degree must finish in a couple of years. The teaching of dietetics is structured according to benchmark statements, and we know that the practical placement training is a key to excellent dietetics, so we have 60 ECTS of practical placement training.

During the dietetic course students have their first contact with the real public in a subject minister in 3rd year. In this, Clinical Education, the student developed, under the teacher supervision, several competencies. This tutorial approach gives the students the opportunity to gain confidence and enlarge his knowledge in clinical dietetic science, and prepare him to a better performance in PPT. The PPT is structured in 3 main areas, community

nutrition, clinical nutrition and food catering, that according to EDBS correspond to administrative area. In the last year the students have to make research, and they have the facility of doing during the final PPT (8th semester).



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Our professional association was officially created in 1986. Portuguese Dietetic Association (APD – www.apdietistas.org.pt) is a member of EFAD. APD has been very involved in EFAD's mission on promoting the dietetics profession, we have hosted the 2009 EFAD general meeting in Lisbon, and we have 2 members on working groups. In Portugal APD is partner of a platform against obesity and is promoting a "health menu to restaurants".

Dietitians are the professionals that have a higher degree in nutrition and dietetics and have experience in managing with patients. General public, patients, physicians and other health professionals respect and recognize our knowledge and skills.

I'm very proud to be a dietitian and every day try to spread it to my students. As a profession we have so much to give and with confidence, enthusiasm and support of all colleges, we will continue to develop the profession for a healthier nutrition of all Portuguese public.

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