House of Delegates December 2025 Meeting: Changing Science Discussion

Overview

At the December 11th House of Delegates meeting, members from the Council on Future Practice presented an overview of changing science as a driver of change to the profession. Delegates engaged in small group discussions on changing science and its implication for nutrition, dietetics, and the broader public landscape. The following questions were posted to all groups with summaries of those discussions below:

1. In the October discussion, we talked about the causes and implications of declining trust. One theme of those discussions was the rise of misinformation through social media. How does declining trust impact changing science?
2. How does changing science impact you and your constituents?
3. How can we empower dietitians to practice in an evidence-based, scientific approach?
4. What are the ethical implications for the profession regarding changing science?

Delegates emphasized how declining public trust and misinformation complicate acceptance of evolving evidence. They explored implications for workforce readiness, ethical responsibilities, and communication strategies. Insights focus on empowering dietitians through timely access to evidence, stronger scientific literacy, and transparent leadership.

Delegate Insights

1. In the October discussion, we talked about the causes and implications of declining trust. One theme of those discussions was the rise of misinformation through social media. How does declining trust impact changing science?

- **Misinformation and Media Dynamics**
  - Science evolves incrementally, but media demands instant certainty.
  - Updates in evidence are perceived as flip-flopping rather than progress.
  - Emerging or nuanced findings are overshadowed by extreme or definitive claims.
- **Erosion of Trust in Institutions, Evidence and Expertise**
  - As recommendations change, the public questions motives rather than methodology.
  - Scientific uncertainty is interpreted as incompetence or bias.
  - Legitimate updates in guidance fuel skepticism and resistance.
- **Communication, Capacity and Professional Readiness**
  - Slow or fragmented communication allows misinformation to fill gaps.
  - Science translation of study findings lags public conversation and policy decisions.

- Without clear, coordinated messaging, evolving science fails to maintain or rebuild trust and understanding.

2. How does changing science impact you and your constituents?

- **Workforce Readiness, Skills and Professional Identity**
  - Changing science requires new skill sets (AI, social media, critical appraisal, science translation) and practitioners must continuously upskill to remain credible and relevant.
  - Gaps in communication skills to explain evidence-based changes in recommendations or standards to colleagues and patients, as well as gaps in up-to-date scientific knowledge and data analysis can weaken professional identity and trust. Failure to adapt education and training to emerging science could threaten enrollment, workforce sustainability, and leadership in nutrition science.

- **Evidence, Research Capacity and Ethical Tensions**
  - The collection of reliable, peer-reviewed research and data that supports best practices is becoming harder to interpret, apply, and defend. This challenge is driven by the growing volume and complexity of evidence, the cherry-picking and misrepresentation of research, declining public trust, and the influence of social media.
  - Perceived or real conflicts of interest within research undermines credibility of outcomes. Similarly perceived financial influence of the Academy and individual practitioners through sponsorships or paid partnerships undermines trust and reliability of recommendations.
  - Slower or weaker research infrastructure limits the profession's ability to lead in emerging areas of practice and public interest.

- **Communication, Access and Trust**
  - Patients and communities may experience confusion when guidance changes, even though these updates are the result of gradual, evidence-based scientific progress as new data refine and strengthen existing understanding.
  - There is a need for clear translations of complex evidence for the public to prevent reliance on non-evidence-based sources.
  - Trust in dietitians and the healthcare community as a whole is built through relationships, accessibility, and demonstrated expertise.

3. How can we empower dietitians to practice in an evidence-based, scientific approach?

- **Access to Evidence, Guidelines and Scientific Infrastructure**
  - Provide centralized and timely access to standards of care, practice guidelines, and evidence summaries.
  - More rapid updating of Academy practice papers, EAL content, and toolkits.

  - Partnerships with other organizations to supplement gaps and improve timeliness of access to cutting edge research.

- **Education, Skills and Scientific Literacy Across the Career Span**
  - Stronger emphasis on research appraisal, study design, and science communication in ACEND accredited programs.
  - Emphasis on continuing education which builds competence in AI, data evaluation, and misinformation response.
  - Explore how to incorporate training for students, interns, and practicing dietetics professionals on how to help clients and the public move beyond headlines to absorb the full content presented.
  - Focus on leveraging emerging skills among students, such as social media and AI, while also providing education and resources on these topics that help seasoned practitioners adapt and remain effective in a rapidly evolving professional environment.
- **Leadership, Collaboration and Professional Influence**
  - Focus on recruiting and supporting leadership that is highly present and proactive, grounded in evidence-based science, and committed to equipping RDNs and NDTRs with tools, advocacy, and confidence to lead effectively.
  - Increase the Academy's commitment to engage in open communication with members around decisions made, policies around funding, scientific integrity and processes. Provide talking points to volunteer leaders and members to counteract pushback by others.
  - Members struggle with interprofessional collaboration skills to build relationships of cross functional healthcare team partnerships which could result in building relationships, joint advocacy, and referral collaboration.
  - Engage with subject matter experts from within membership early and often to ensure work is accurate, timely, transparent, inclusive, and practical.
  - Continued advocacy in policy, licensure, reimbursement, and preventive care models.

4. What are the ethical implications for the profession regarding changing science?

- **Integrity of Evidence, Transparency and "Do No Harm"**
  - Dietetics professionals have a duty to provide the best available evidence while acknowledging where uncertainty exists.
  - Transparency about funding, data sources, and limitations of the research is essential to maintain trust.
  - Failure to critically evaluate data or technology use in practice may result in harm.

- **Ethical Communication, Trust and Public Accountability**
    - Ethical practice requires accurate, timely, and clear communication of evolving science.
    - Silence, delayed response, or overly technical messaging with clients allows harm to occur.
    - Reframing misinformation respectfully and acknowledging uncertainty ("we're learning as we go") is ethically preferable to disengagement.

- **Equity, Representation and Professional Responsibility**
    - Equity in nutrition care depends on diverse representation, communication that is accessible to all, and storytelling that reflects cultural relevance and authenticity.
    - Elevating diverse voices ensures representation. Aligning messages with shared values makes communication authentic and culturally relevant. Together, these actions build ethical trust in the profession.
    - Everyone in the profession has a shared duty to teach or share emerging skills, uphold ethics, and strengthen communication so both students and practitioners can thrive in a fast-changing, tech-driven, and socially complex environment.