

EatRight Ontario (ERO): A Dietitian Contact Centre and its impact on nutrition services

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Introduction: ERO was a multi-modal dietitian contact centre, managed by Dietitians of Canada that offered free, evidence based healthy eating advice, based on PEN: Practice-based Evidence in Nutrition® and behaviour change support to Ontarians. Access was by phone, email or website.

Objectives: To determine ERO's impact on consumer outcomes, health intermediaries (HI) supports, and nutrition service delivery in Ontario.

Methods: An e-survey link was sent to consumers in the fall of 2017, 1- 4 weeks after contacting ERO, to assess perceived benefits, satisfaction and self-reported outcomes. 48% of respondents provided email addresses after using the ERO phone service, while 52% followed a link to the survey through the ERO's consumer eNews Bulletin. Consumers were streamed based on inquiry; diabetes, infant/child feeding, and all other nutrition topics. Health intermediaries were e-surveyed to assess the impacts of ERO on their professional practice, agency and nutrition service delivery. HI were invited to participate through ERO's HI eNews bulletin.

Results: 867 consumers and 337 HI completed the survey. Of consumers 90–97% were satisfied with the service and indicated that they understood the information provided, felt better informed, got the advice they needed and were able to use the advice provided (Table 1). 93% of consumer respondents made 2-4 desirable behaviour changes following their contact with ERO, or had their current behaviours confirmed (Table 2).

95% of HI indicated that ERO provided a valuable service and positive impact on their service (Table 3). ERO provided access to evidence-based resources and advice (80%), increased access to dietitians (79%), supported government policies (55-72%, sector dependent) decreased their need to develop additional resources, and answer client inquiries. HI strongly valued ERO's role in supporting their professional practice, clients, and the work of their organization with minimal concerns of duplication of roles. 35% of HI surveyed indicated that ERO was a needed service. Without ERO, they felt there would be gap in accessing dietitians (58%), credible information (49%) and ERO resources (37%).

Conclusions: Consumers indicate that ERO is a highly valued service positively impacting and improving health knowledge and behavior change. HI strongly valued ERO's role in supporting their professional practice and building capacity within their sector, and therefore shifted functions and consumer supports to ERO, like resource development and consumer inquiries, so that they could focus on other agency priorities.

Significance to Dietetics: ERO, a multi-modal dietitian contact centre provided an innovative approach to access dietitians and engage consumers, which can serve as a prototype for others. Quantitative and qualitative data show that ERO played a trusted role in providing nutrition knowledge and behavior change to consumers. HI relied on this service, and indicated that its absence would create strategic and operational gaps in nutrition service delivery in Ontario.

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Table 1

Information Utilization by Inquiry Type % “strongly agree” or “agree” (consumer responses)			
Service Feature	Diabetes Inquiries (n=140)	Infant/Child Inquiries (n=122)	All Other (n=522)
I understand the information provided	97%	96%	95%
I feel better informed	93%	95%	92%
I got the advice I needed	92%	94%	90%
I am able to use the advice given	92%	95%	90%
I am satisfied with the service	92%	94%	92%

Table 2

Top Behaviour Changes Reported by Consumers		
Diabetes (n=143)	Infant/Child Feeding (n=123)	Other (n=556)
Eat smaller portions (57%)	Offer child variety of foods (42%)	Increase variety of healthy foods (41%)
Eat more vegetables (54%)	Let child decide on how much (33%)	Improve portion control (34%)
Choose healthier foods (53%)	Offer child iron rich foods (28%)	Read food label (34%)
Eat more fibre-rich foods ((50%)	Offer child variety of textures (22%)	Increase fibre-rich foods (30%)
Do more physical activity (45%)	ERO confirmed what I was doing (20%)	Decrease sugar intake (27%)
Median = 4	Median = 2	Median = 3

Table 3

Value of Service to Health Intermediaries			
Statement about ERO	All HI (n=335)	Public Health (n=188)	RD/ Nutrition (n=178)
Excellent or good value	90%	95-99%	
Trustworthy information	100%	100%	100%
Compliments my service	96%	100%	100%
Offers service that would not be provided due to funding/scope	71%	94%	83%
Duplicates my service	7%	10%	6%