

## Invited Speaker Abstract

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### Title

Prevention, workplace health promotion and the role of the dietitian

### 1. Abstract

Introduction: Health care is more and more developing from cure and care to prevention of disease. Self-management and lifestyle behavioural change contribute to prevention of disease and can be the target of policy and care. There are many domains where lifestyle changes can take place, like at home, school and in sports. Another important domain – relatively new for Dutch dietitians - is the workplace.

Various lifestyle factors, like physical activity, nutrition, smoking, alcohol and stress, influence the employability of employees. Vice versa, labour influences the lifestyle and health of employees. The workplace can be a good place for health promotion because it is easy accessible and health promotion can be given on organisational, team and individual level. A dietitian can take a role in this. However, are organisations willing to give a role to the dietitian concerning worksite health promotion?

Methods: To explore the (possible) role of dietitians in labour organisations, interviews were held with several employers of Dutch organisations. Questions were formulated about the experiences of employers with the deployment of dietitians, such as the tasks given to dietitians, their contribution to the health of employees, their experience in cooperating with dietitians. There were interviews with dietitians who have worked in organisations as well. Questions were formulated about the competences dietitians need to contribute to health promotion in the workplace.

Results: The results of these interviews will be presented and the consequences for a broader deployment of dietitians in companies and organizations, both from the viewpoint of the employers and employees as well as from the dietetic profession itself and the primary education of dietitians will be discussed.

Specific knowledge of nutrition, awareness and empowerment of behaviour are the most important reasons for an employer to hire a dietitian. Employees indicate that dietitians are motivating employees to make healthier lifestyle choices on individual- and organization level (e.g. the 'healthy' canteen). Furthermore, they have a role for teams and the organization to make lifestyle change negotiable. Dietitians need to have more entrepreneur skills to take this role.

**2. key references**

- Steenstra, M., Engels, J., & Heerkens, Y. (2016) Hoe zijn bedrijven de rol van de diëtist bij leefstijlbevordering op de werkvloer? [What is the opinion and experience of employers with the deployment of dietitians for workplace health promotion]. NTvD: 71(4)
- Steenstra, M. (2012) De diëtist in bedrijf. [The role of dietitians in labour organisations]. NTvD: 67(5)

**3. key messages**

- Dietitians can fulfil a significant role in health promotion in the workplace.
- Employers can still be reluctant to hire dietitians as long as they are not convinced of their additional value.
- In the education of new dietitians more attention must be given to knowledge, skills and attitude related to work participation and working conditions.