Role of the Dietitian in Multidisciplinary Treatment of Polycystic Ovary Syndrome

Wendy M. Thompson¹; Pamela J. Murray, MD, MHP²; Melanie J. Clemmer, PhD³; Melissa D. Olfort DrPH, MS, RD, LD¹,⁴

West Virginia University: ¹Davis College of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Design - Department of Human Nutrition and Foods; ²School of Medicine – Department of Pediatrics, Adolescent Medicine; ³School of Medicine – Department of OB/GYN, ⁴School of Public Health

OBJECTIVES
- To investigate current trends in multidisciplinary treatment of PCOS across different providers
- To describe potential implications of future multidisciplinary PCOS clinics
- To explore the role, importance and challenges for RDs in multidisciplinary PCOS treatment

BACKGROUND
- PCOS estimated prevalence of 5-10%¹,²
- Most common endocrine disorder in women¹,²
- Lifestyle intervention is the first-line treatment for women with PCOS³
- The literature documenting the efficacy of multidisciplinary PCOS clinic have demonstrated:
  - Increased weight loss⁴,⁵
  - High patient satisfaction rates⁴
  - High retention rates⁴,⁵
- The literature documenting the current utilization of dietitians in PCOS suggests:
  - Only 26% of overweight PCOS patients received a referral for a dietitian⁶
  - Only 15% PCOS patients saw a dietitian and 3% had seen an RD for more than twice³

METHODS
This was a two tier study with survey followed by a series of focus groups to gather information from health care providers who treat PCOS.

The survey (Qualtrics, Provo, UT) consisted of 30 questions, which included multiple-choice, multiple-response, and open-ended questions targeting information on their current treatment facility and approach, and perspectives about multidisciplinary clinics.

The series of focus groups were conducted via teleconference and consisted of seven open-ended questions, which targeted information on the current utilization of nutrition interventions for PCOS and the challenges for involving dietitians. Data was analyzed using a thematic analysis.

FOCUS GROUP RESULTS
Top Challenges for Dietitians and PCOS

- Communication Differences:
  - Sick Providers: Limited opportunity for face-to-face
  - Only progress notes and occasional emails
  - Not ideal, but still effective
- Multidisciplinary Providers:
  - More verbal communication and integration
  - Varies by setting
  - Desires more communication

What Warrants Dietary Intervention?
- Always important to discuss and provide nutrition counseling
- Equally important regardless of BMI
- Immediately upon diagnosis patients should meet with RD
- First line treatment

ACCESSIBILITY:
- NOT VERY ACCESSIBLE!
  - Overweight and obese
  - More symptomatic
  - More obvious referrals
  - Lean PCOS
  - Overlooked

CONCLUSIONS
PCOS is a complex condition that requires the expertise of multiple provider types to treat the syndrome in its entirety. Most providers agree that a multidisciplinary clinic would provide greater convenience, access to care, and ultimately lead to a better prognosis for patients with PCOS. The perceived barriers that prevent clinics from becoming multidisciplinary would need to be well defined, but providers indicate enthusiasm for the opportunity to implement a multidisciplinary approach.

Lifestyle interventions are heavily overlooked in the treatment of PCOS and there are many challenges to incorporating dietitians but with improvements in education and insurance they can play an integral role in PCOS.