

Learning Experiences

Dietetic Interns at UCSF Medical Center participate in all activities of the Nutrition and Food Services Department. Teaching interns is an integral part of our department's mission and goals. Interns work individually or in groups of two or three with a supervising staff member for all major learning experiences.

Inpatient Clinical Nutrition

In inpatient clinical nutrition learning experiences, interns first learn basic skills for clinical nutrition care of hospitalized adult patients during the clinical nutrition core. Under the supervision of a clinical Registered Dietitian, interns master skills in reading medical records, gathering and analyzing nutritionally relevant data, and generating a complete nutrition assessment for individual patients. Following assessment of nutritional status, interns develop a nutrition care plan, implement nutrition interventions and monitor patient progress. Because UCSF is a teaching medical center, many of our patients have complex medical conditions and nutrition diagnoses. Interns work with challenging patients to enhance their clinical skills. UCSF interns gain significant experiences with both enteral and parenteral nutrition support, as well as other medical nutrition therapies for a variety of diseases. Following approximately four months of experience in the adult inpatient area, interns progress to advanced clinical nutrition learning experiences in adult critical care units and in pediatrics.

Management

Management learning experiences encompass institutional food service management, retail food service management, and clinical management. Food service experiences take place in our large, conventional kitchen at UCSF Medical Center. Under the supervision of a chef, RD managers and other managers and supervisors, interns participate in large scale food production, purchasing, patient meal service, and cafeteria merchandizing and sales. Interns participate in daily operations and work on projects related to department needs such as analysis of systems, development of policies and procedures, performance improvement and quality control, special cafeteria menus, and employee training.

Nutrition Counseling and Education

Interns complete learning experiences in Nutrition Counseling and Education following completion of foundation experiences in the Inpatient Clinical Nutrition Core. Nutrition Counseling and Education learning experiences focus on expanding interns' knowledge of and experience with nutrition counseling and education in the ambulatory setting. Experiences take place at adult and pediatric UCSF ambulatory care practices, the Mount Zion Adult Dialysis Center, UCSF affiliated clinics operated by the San Francisco Department of Public Health, and an off-site community food/nutrition program or agency in the San Francisco Bay Area. Interns provide one-to-one MNT counseling and education for clients with a variety of health conditions, ranging in age from infants to elders. In addition, interns gain experience in a group education setting by attending the 4-day Diabetes Teaching Center Intensive Insulin Therapy Workshop. Interns translate nutrition practice standards and guidelines into practical advice for clients, adjusting the content of sessions based on clients' level of education, readiness to change, and cultural/ethnic practices. For the off-site community experience, interns select a community program or agency to meet their interests. While the specific learning experiences vary by the selected site and services provided, interns gain experience with community-based screening and assessment, participate in program development and evaluation, and conduct education for target populations.

Research Dietetics

Interns complete research learning experiences at the General Clinical Research Centers (GCRC) at UCSF Medical Center and San Francisco General Hospital. Research Dietetics comprises a one-week didactic unit, developed and overseen by the Bionutrition Research Manager of the GCRC. Didactic experiences provide an introduction to reviewing journal articles, designing research diets, and measuring body composition using a variety of methods. Additionally, interns attend lectures about studies currently underway at the GCRC.

Elective

Elective experiences offer opportunities to work with dietitians in a variety of UCSF and off-campus sites including the UCSF General Clinical Research Center, Pediatric Specialty Clinics, and additional experience in management. Off-site electives vary each year and may include community nutrition programs or agencies, nutrition research programs, dietitians in private practice, commercial companies, and others.

Other Intern Classes

In addition to didactic experiences that are scheduled during the learning experiences described above, the following class series are scheduled during the internship year:

- Legislation and Public Policy
- Ethnic and Cultural Eating Habits
- Professional Development and Career Building

Staff Experience

After demonstration of competence, interns complete a minimum of two weeks of staff experience in inpatient clinical nutrition. Staff experiences solidify interns' knowledge, provide an opportunity to function independently and reinforce expected practices for an entry-level dietitian. Interns are supervised by a registered dietitian.