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To the Editor:

I strongly feel the need to respond to the article "The RD: Perceptions, Assumptions, and Reality" which appeared in the September 2007 issue of *Today's Dietitian*. I appreciate the article taking a closer look at public awareness of the registered dietitian; however the article contains numerous inaccuracies that must be addressed.

While space doesn't permit a line-by-line rebuttal of the article, its premise that ADA has a poor track record of promoting the RD is simply not true, and the list of suggestions on "what can be done?" includes many initiatives that already take place. As a volunteer spokesperson for ADA, I conduct interviews every day with journalists throughout the country. My fellow ADA spokespeople and the members of ADA's Public Relations Team work daily to educate journalists on the difference between an RD and a nutritionist. The results speak for themselves: Thousands of articles and broadcast interviews each year reach tens of millions of people with ADA's messages that include the importance of working with a registered dietitian as opposed to a possibly unqualified "nutritionist."

In just the past year, both *Redbook* and *InStyle* magazine worked with ADA on articles highlighting the differences and promoting the RD as the best choice for nutrition information. The September 2007 issue of *Parents* featured the second collaboration between ADA and the magazine in two years that promotes the registered dietitian and offers science-based nutrition advice on children's nutrition.

The article implied that National Nutrition Month is not used to promote the registered dietitian. In reality, ADA's National Nutrition Month outreach annually brings our messages about the importance of RDs to the media and public. News about RDs and National Nutrition Month in 2007 reached more than 15 million people; ADA's window display in Rockefeller Center reached hundreds of thousands of consumers daily with information about the importance of seeing an RD. To coincide with National Nutrition Month 2008, ADA inaugurates Registered Dietitian Day on March 10 and plans numerous activities to build public and media awareness of RDs and honor the work we do.

The article recommends ADA sponsor radio, TV or Web broadcasts to provide reliable nutrition information. Unfortunately, the costs of such broadcasts would be prohibitive for a nonprofit organization such as ADA. But ADA still has been creative and effective in bringing our messages to the airwaves.

Since 1997, Connie B. Diekman, MEd, RD, LD, FADA, who is the 2007-08 President of ADA, has presented the “Eating Right Minute” on one of Chicago’s most-popular radio stations, WBBM-AM. The Eating Right Minute airs three times a day and, thanks to ADA’s efforts, is now available for anyone to download as a podcast from the station’s Web site at [www.wbbm780.com](http://www.wbbm780.com).

On my weekly radio show, the “Houston Texans Fitness Show with Roberta and Riley,” we regularly advise listeners on the value of an RD, not a nutritionist, in the provision of nutrition services.

ADA’s “Tip of the Day,” one of the most-read features on the Association’s Web site, also appears on the sites of every NBC affiliate TV station in the country, again directly as a result of ADA’s work on our behalf.

Budget permitting, ADA produces television public service announcements promoting registered dietitians; the current PSA has reached an audience of more than five million people. ADA has posted videos to the Internet promoting the work of RDs. In fact, the most recent video is titled “RD: Your Link to Nutrition and Health.” This and other ADA videos are accessible through the video library on the Association’s Web site.

ADA continually explores even more new directions in public outreach to bring your expertise and your story to the public. ADA saw the explosion of interest in blogs as a great way to supplement its media coverage and tell our story in a place where increasingly more people congregate for their information – the Web. Each week on ADA’s new blog, RDsWeighIn, a posting by one of ADA’s spokespeople communicates the straight story on food and nutrition that is based on sound science and common sense. ADA’s blog is at <http://rdsweighin.typepad.com>.

All these facts, and more, were available to the authors of your article from ADA’s Public Relations Team, and from information posted by ADA to the Association’s Web site. I am dismayed that the authors did not contact ADA or any of our Association’s member spokespeople who work daily to correct erroneous assumptions and raise public awareness of registered dietitians.

Finally, the authors state correctly that, along with ADA, individual ADA members must “grasp their own destiny and initiate changes.” For all its achievements and successes on our behalf, ADA cannot do it alone. No member association can (or does). We as individuals must take more of the initiative. Simply stated, we, the members, are ADA. Contact your local media and offer yourself as *the expert*. ADA shows you how to do this in the Association’s free booklet *Working with the Media: A Handbook for Members of the American Dietetic Association*, which is downloadable from [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org). Seek opportunities related to your skills and experience. For example, many members, myself included, have their own radio shows or appear regularly on TV news segments dedicated to nutrition and health, and most of these members are not Association spokespeople. Their initiative is to be applauded and – I hope – imitated!

The bottom line is: Every American Dietetic Association member must be a spokesperson for ADA, the dietetics profession and ourselves.

Sincerely,

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American Dietetic Association Spokesperson