

Lisa's Story

Lisa Hoelscher, MPH, RD, LD

Having spent third through eighth grades living abroad in English and French schools, I arrived at the end of my high school career in the United States with too many choices about what I wanted to study in college. Through the vision of wonderful advisors at Purdue, I ended up in the Foods & Nutrition department, graduating with a double major in Foods in Business and Dietetics. I completed a dietetic internship at the Massachusetts General Hospital, then married and started following my husband around the country.



I worked in clinical, outpatient, public health, long-term care, hospice, teaching and research. Along the way, I developed a firm belief in the importance of prevention, and took advantage of our time living in Atlanta to get a Master's of Public Health from Emory University. Majoring in nutrition was not an option so I studied health education, which was a good fit since I enjoy teaching. For 25 years, I maintained the CHES credential along with the RD.

When I look at my resume of over 35 years, the "employment" section is full of variety, but the "selected volunteer activities" section shows a consistent interest in nutrition communication. Volunteering with my local and state dietetic associations was a great way to network for jobs each time we moved to a new area, as well as gain experience in areas that paid employment did not offer. I've served as National Nutrition Month chair, publicity chair, newsletter editor, worked on website design, and chaired conferences. My most rewarding project was co-editing a monthly nutrition column for the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel for seven years. We used local RD writers to write columns according to the editor's theme for each year. It was a win-win situation since the editor got local input, the RDs got bylines, the coordinators got editing experience, and we publicized what is now the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics in each column.

In the last decade or so, I was a behavioral interventionist for several national research studies such as Look AHEAD and the Women's Health Initiative. Working with the same groups of participants for years piqued my interest in clear communication. It was fascinating how 15 people could each take different messages away from the same small group discussion. This led me to study health literacy, and my current interest is promoting the use of health literacy concepts in verbal and written communication, especially with senior citizens.

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