

Mike Korona, RDN, CNSC

Nutrition Support Dietitian



What is your job title?

Nutrition Support Specialist

Where do you work (setting and/or company)?

Touchpoint Services. Ascension St. John Hospital in Detroit, Michigan.

How long have you been at this job?

9 months.

Please describe your job (including typical role, population served and anything else you feel is important in understanding the job):

My role varies day to day. As a Nutrition Support specialist, I cover parenteral nutrition ordering and services for patients aging from neonates (in the NICU), pediatric patients and to adult patients. I round with the interdisciplinary team daily for whatever patient population I cover and I will order monitoring labs, review labs, and coordinate changes in nutritional interventions (parenteral nutrition and enteral nutrition) depending on the global plan of care.

Does your job require any additional schooling or education?

My job requires advanced understanding and certification in nutrition support. The certification CNSC (certified nutrition support clinician) is that advanced certification that is for those to show that they possess that knowledge. This certification is interdisciplinary and can be help by dietitians, nurses, physicians, physician assistance, nurse practitioners and pharmacists. Since it is interdisciplinary, the test and knowledge base is all encompassing as well.

Additionally, to do well and be successful in nutrition support you have to have a strong understanding for physiology and acid base disorders.

What are possible places of employment for your position?

For employment I am a hospital-based practitioner. Being a nutrition support specialist means that I am needed in areas that have a high concentration of nutrition support and this tends to be in the inpatient setting. Another location and area that I could work in includes outpatient clinical settings such as home pharmacies, and for infusion services (those who also manage parenteral nutrition).

What is your favorite thing about your job?

The favorite part of my job is to have and be a HUGE part of the interdisciplinary plan and team. Parenteral nutrition, actually nutrition in general, plays a role and is affected by ALL body systems. As a nutrition support clinician, I get an opportunity to be an integral member of the team and to also perform my own assessments, order my own interventions and to act as a relatively independent practitioner.

What is your least favorite thing about your job?

The least favorite part of my job is dealing with certain members of the interdisciplinary team. This overall ability is a double-edged sword, one of my favorite roles is to provide education to other team members

through education, presentations and shadowing experiences. HOWEVER, I still deal with professionals who do not value the role of dietitians in management of nutrition support, something that I continue to work through and try to overcome the barriers but is sometimes a very difficult role of my job.

Why/how did you choose your field and how did you get into it?

I chose nutrition because I was always fascinated with the impact that food had on my feelings. I played competitive soccer growing up and had some experiences with dietitians for our team growing up. Being told what to eat and having someone try and guide nutritional interventions was something that I never understood growing up. However, once I got to college, I chose to take a nutrition class to understand the importance and I was hooked. I originally wanted to do sports nutrition to continue this initial plan, however found critical care nutrition to be just as interesting. Understanding the role that nutrition plays in the most critical time of people's lives has fascinated me; molding nutrition to my patients to provide the best outcome- reducing mortality or death has always been my goal.

What is your educational background?

I attended Eastern Michigan University for my undergraduate degree and entered into their Coordinated Program in Dietetics. Coordinated programs for nutrition are when you have classes AND your "practice experience/ internships so to speak" at the same time and once you graduate from the program you can take the exam. I worked in the hospital setting and now am furthering my education with my Master's in Human Nutrition at Eastern Michigan University. I am actually set to graduate this spring 2020.

What is your job/work background?

Upon graduating from EMU with my bachelors and passing my RD exam- I worked in a small community hospital (200 beds, 1 ICU with 10 beds) for 1.5 years. I covered all floors through the course of that but finished the last 6 months covering the ICU and also becoming a "super user" for the electronic medical system which allowed me to come to the other hospitals in the system to aid in their transition from paper to electronic charting.

After that I chose to move to a larger institution and moved to a large university hospital (UofM) where I worked for 5 years and covered mainly the ICU rotations (medical ICU, cardiovascular ICU, surgical ICU). It was here that I developed my desire for nutrition support and was able to obtain my certification and develop my role as a parenteral nutrition expert for the system. I would order TPN's daily, and my expertise was sought out by teams and physicians. I was given the opportunity to develop an education program for fellows (surgical and anesthesia fellows (7th+ year physicians who were specializing in areas such as critical care) and provide classes, experiences, and elective rotations for them to cover critical care nutrition.

Do you do any volunteer work?

I do not do any volunteer work regularly at this time. I have over the years routinely volunteered for local high schools providing required nutritional education for sports teams (wrestling).

Why did you decide to become an RD?

I decided to become an RD because I wanted to understand and help others understand the importance that food plays for a person to maximize benefits (whatever benefits you are looking for).

Why/how did you decide to pursue other credentials beyond the RD?

I chose to pursue my CNSC (nutrition support certification) because of my desire to learn about parenteral nutrition and how it affects a person. I wanted to understand how I could effectively manage it

for hospitalized patients to maximize outcomes. I chose to continue to obtain my master's degree because I continue to want to learn, I additionally want to teach at a university and a master's degree is required.

What do you like and what do you not like about the field in general?

I like teaching nutrition. Nutrition is a relatively new "field" of medicine, much of what we know now is completely NEW and was unknown even 10 years ago. I want to pass this knowledge onto others to help improve overall care.

What do you think are the most important things for students and/or new RDs to know?

I think it is most important to know two things:

1. That we practice EVIDENCE BASED. Just because we are taught one way now does not mean that this will not stay the same way through our entire practice. We need to constantly stay up to date with research and evidence to make sure that we are practicing correct measures.
2. To understand the WHY. Keep learning as to WHY you are doing something, why we are recommending the interventions, WHY our labs reflect a certain way, WHY acid base plays a role and WHY we are making the changes we are making. Do not just do something "because that's what so and so said or because that's the way you were taught". You need to really understand the WHY we are doing these things, this is the KEY your teachers and preceptors need to understand. If, as a preceptor, I can get you to understand the WHY you are recommending TPN and making the changes in the TPN today, I will be making you successful in the future. I will not be there forever and will not be there to tell you what to do years from now. It's my job to help you understand the why so you can be the most effective practitioner in the future.

What areas in dietetics do you think will become more important/growing in the future?

I believe overall nutritional maintenance as people age, composition of protein and ratios of protein to other macronutrients is the most important. Understanding how much protein to consume to optimize lean body mass and prevent lean mass loss as you age is the most important thing; understanding and maintaining strength as you age to keep you active and healthy is important.

Tell us more about yourself/anything interesting you'd like to share!

I am 29 years old. I am interested in education and teaching. I want to help teach and have the professionals practice optimized and efficient methods of nutritional care. I love talking and passing this knowledge on. Additionally, I love sports, I played competitive soccer most of my life and continue to watch to this day.

