

Online Discussions Netiquette and Terms of Use

Use

The Dietitians in Business & Communications (DBC) Dietetic Practice Group (DPG) manages electronic discussion lists to promote networking and sharing of information and expertise among members. Opinions expressed by participants on DBC discussion lists are not necessarily the views of the DBC or the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (Academy), and DBC/Academy is not responsible for information posted by participants. While the Academy will from time to time monitor the content of messages on the lists, it does not select or edit material posted by list participants prior to its posting. Participants are urged to use their professional judgment in evaluating the appropriateness and nature of the information posted.

Netiquette

The following are points of conduct and protocol that will improve the experience of all participants in the lists.

Requirements:

The following practices are required for all DBC listserv postings. Any breach of the following requirements will be grounds for removal from the mailing lists (see "Violations and Enforcement").

1. Commercial endorsements and/or postings are not allowed. Specific examples may include (but are not limited to) educational offerings on behalf of clients or promotion of a client's product or service.
 - a. DBC members will check with the DBC EML manager (DBC@quidnunc.net) prior to posting any questionable material.
 - b. Event postings will be consistent, listing the title, date and time of the program, perhaps a one-sentence description, a link that the member can go to for additional information, and if CDR has approved the program for CPE.
 - c. Postings should be clear, concise and informational in nature.
2. Surveys initiated by members or students require prior approval from both the Academy and DBC.

Recommendations:

Adherence to these suggested practices is strongly encouraged.

1. Unless responding to a message in which the author has specifically asked for private replies, a participant should send any reply to the list so the response is shared. Addressing a copy to the sender is usually not required, but is acceptable.
2. A participant should include a descriptive subject line in each posting. If using the digest mode and wishing to respond to a post, the participant should be sure to use a subject header that matches the original post. A participant should sign every message with the name, organization, phone number and e-mail address of the sender. Promotional tag lines should be kept to a minimum.
3. Where it is appropriate to reply only to the original sender, as with "me too" or "I agree" messages, the participant should refrain from replying to the entire list unless the message will be of interest to the majority of contributors to the ongoing discussion.
4. The language of a written message can be ambiguous and subject to different interpretations. Each participant should carefully consider the phrasing and choice of language in his or her message to ensure that the intended message is conveyed. Although the list is private and confidential, all participants should also consider the effect of their message if publicly distributed or read by a third party.
5. A participant should refrain from sending jokes/chain letters/junk mail, religious messages, or spam. Email attachments are not permitted. In addition, each participant has an obligation to other participants to take appropriate steps to avoid the spread of viruses through the list, including the installation of virus protection on all computers by which the list is accessed.

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Other Usage Guidelines

The following Guidelines are intended to preserve the purpose and intent of the listservs. Anyone who participates in the lists is expected to read and abide by the Guidelines in all communications. Any breach of these Guidelines will be grounds for removal from the mailing lists (see "Violations and Enforcement").

1. All participants must conduct themselves within the bounds of professionalism, courtesy and respect. While disagreements and differences of opinion are encouraged, no one may engage in personal attacks or criticism that has the effect of disparaging or insulting any individual. Inflammatory comments, taunting, and baiting are prohibited.
2. The following topics and subject matter are unacceptable, must not appear in messages on the lists, and may in some instances constitute violations of the Academy Code of Ethics:
 - a. Discussions of price, fees, or reimbursement amounts (which, as noted by the Academy's General Counsel, may create the risk of antitrust exposure to the Academy and to participants);
 - b. Abusive, threatening, defamatory or libelous comments;
 - c. Pornographic, obscene or sexual materials or references;
 - d. Inappropriate comments or references with respect to race, gender, religion,
 - e. sexual orientation or ethnic background;
 - f. Religious solicitations
 - g. Profanity;
 - h. Illegal or unethical practices; or
 - i. Advertising, promotions, or endorsements of commercial products or services.
3. Attachments are not allowed. Should a reference or document be requested, individuals are responsible for requesting directly from the member. In some cases, documents may be added to the DBC resource web page on www.dbconline.org. Contact the DBC Office (DBC@quidnunc.net) if you would like a reference posted.
4. All messages posted to the list are, except where otherwise indicated, intended to be viewed only by members of the list (DBC members), other Academy members and Academy staff, and should be treated as confidential. Except for messages clearly intended for broad circulation, such as those requesting professional assistance or publicizing job openings or opportunities, no message should be forwarded to or shared with an unintended recipient without the author's permission. Members of the list must also refrain from giving access to the list to nonmembers.
5. List participants must not utilize the lists for purposes that cause injury or damage to the Academy, its DPGs, or that are directly detrimental to the Academy's or DBC's interests. While constructive criticism and open discussion are appropriate, distortions, false statements, misrepresentations, or deceptive practices are not. Participants should state clearly that opinions expressed on matters of public interest are their personal views and not those of the Academy.

Violations and Enforcement

Discussion lists are a value-added service of DBC/Academy, and they are owned by the Academy for use by its members. DBC/Academy reserves the right to remove offending or offensive messages from the List and to bar any participant who violates these Guidelines. The following process shall apply to addressing potential violations:

1. Members or staffs who become aware of them may raise complaints or inquiries about possible violations. The Academy and DBC reserve the right to designate staff personnel to monitor the lists from time to time.
2. The initial decision to act upon any violations, or any complaints about list participants' conduct, will depend upon the severity of the violation and will be made by the CEO of the Academy.
3. Where action beyond a letter of warning to the violator is recommended and called for, such as removal of the participant from the list or referral to the Academy Ethics Committee, the decision will be referred to the Executive Committee of the Academy Board of Directors for consideration and action.