

# Dietitians are still widely unknown in the German population

## Authors and affiliation:

Spieker T<sup>1</sup>, Diehl B<sup>1</sup>, Heinze L<sup>1</sup>, Hofmann V<sup>1</sup>,  
Laurenz C<sup>1</sup>, Wierling A<sup>1</sup>, Zühlke A, Ramminger  
S<sup>1</sup>, Buchholz D<sup>1</sup>, Valentini L

Department of Dietetics, University of Applied  
Sciences Neubrandenburg, Mecklenburg-  
Vorpommern, Germany

<sup>1</sup> registered dietitian



## Result 1

The profession was known by 49.3% of the participants  
(n= 140; ♀= 70, ♂= 70; aged 47±11 years).

Women tended to know the profession better than men (p= 0.06).

## Result 2

Tab. 1 What is your main association with the professional title 'diet assistant'?  
(only single answers were possible)

<b>Weight loss</b>	<b>34.4 %</b>
Healthy nutrition	29.3 %
Consulting, therapy, etc.	24.3 %
<b>Association to diseases</b>	<b>8.6 %</b>
Other	3.5 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>100 %</b>

The participants associated the professional field of dietitians mainly with  
*weight loss* (34.4 %), whereas the *association with diseases* was only 8.6 %.

## Result 3

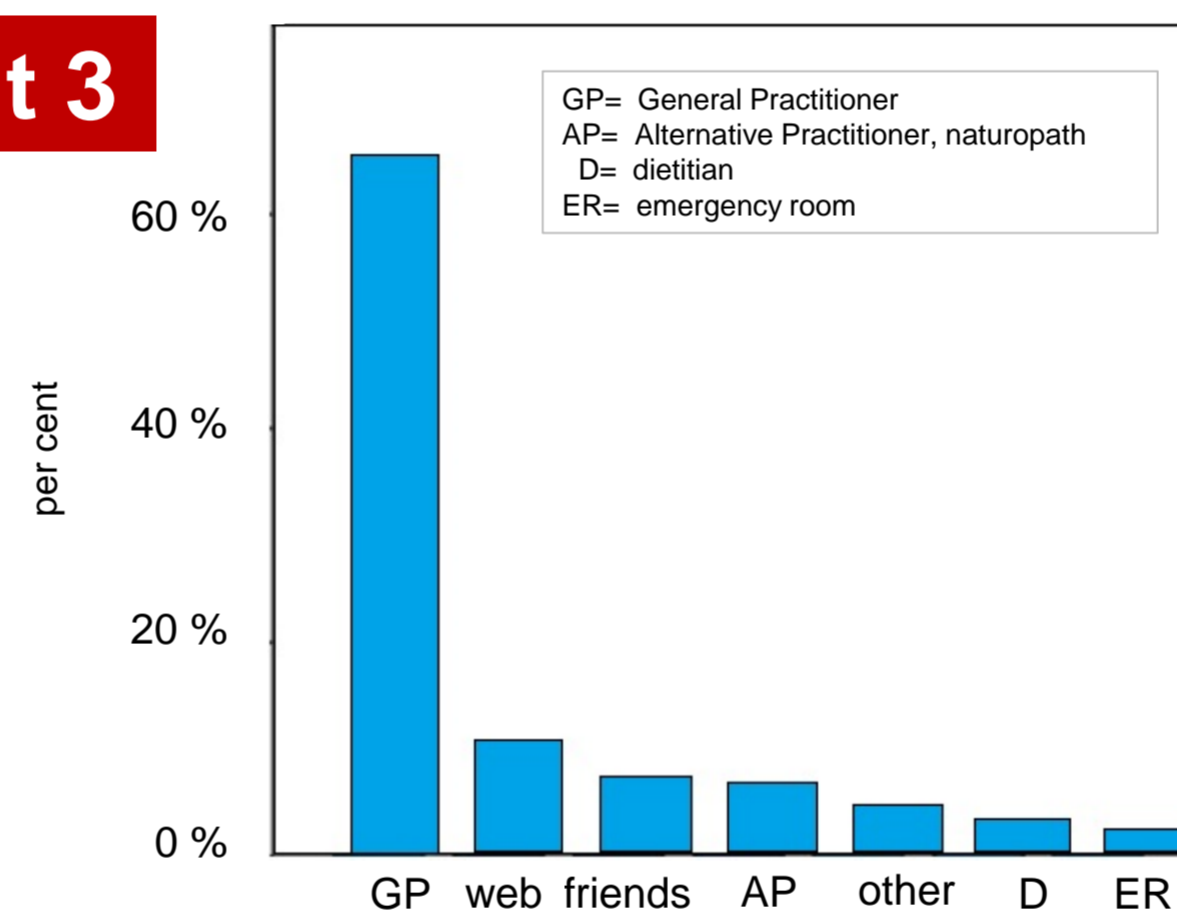


Fig. 2 Who do you contact first about a nutrition related problem?

The vast majority of the participants (65.7%) preferred seeing their *General Practitioner* about nutrition related complaints, while only 2.9 % chose to consult the *dietitian*.

## Result 4

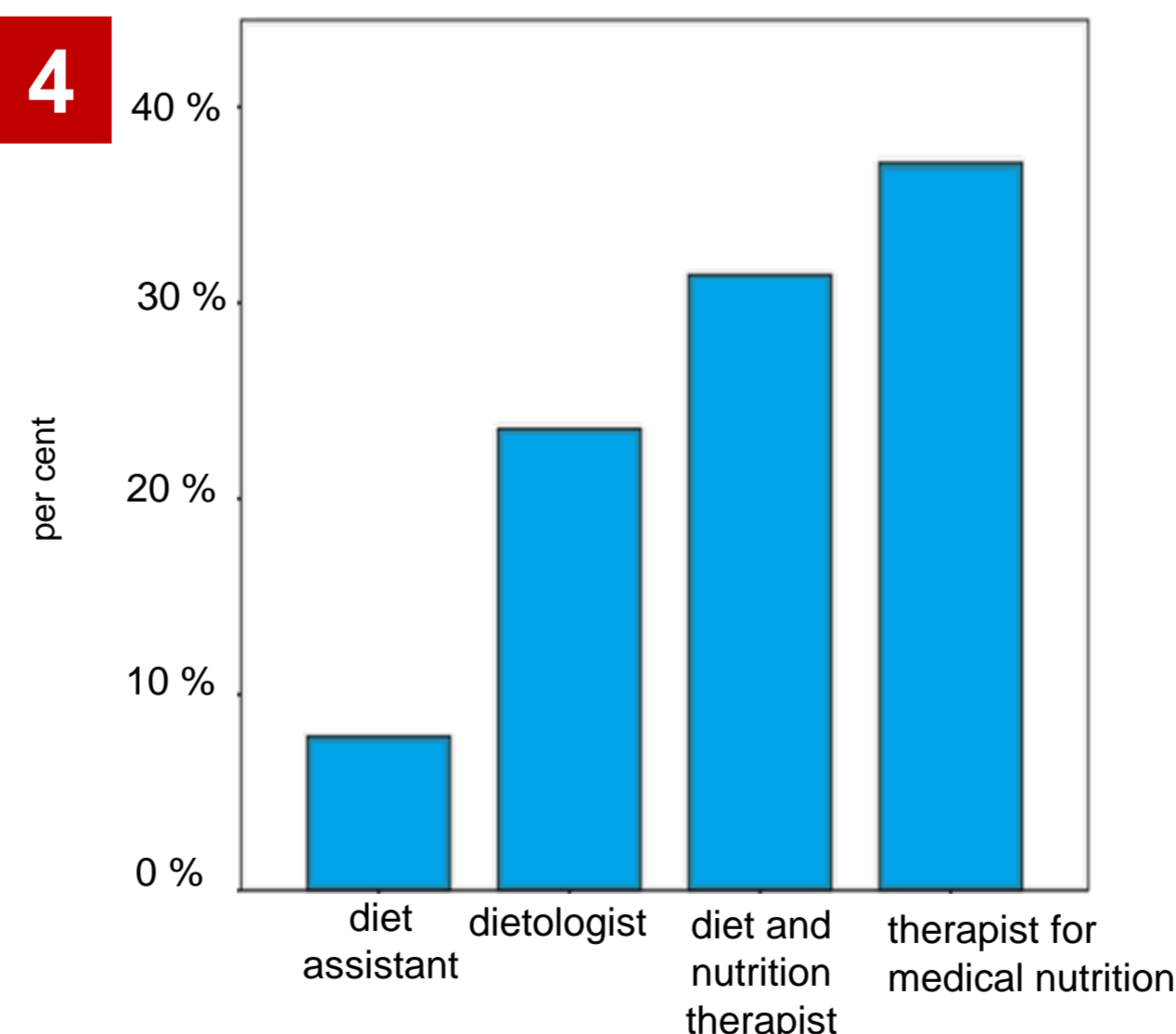


Fig. 3 Which of the following professional titles do you associate with the highest professional competence?

The professional titles "*therapist for medical nutrition*" (37.1%) and "*diet and nutrition therapist*" (31.3%) are associated with a higher competence compared with the present professional title "*diet assistant*" (7.9 %).

## Conclusion

Our findings demonstrate that there is a demand for improved information of the population on the profession of dietitians.

Renaming the profession is necessary because of the one-sided and narrow association of the profession and the widely unknown occupation.

## Rationale

The professional title of dietitians is currently discussed in Germany.

Likewise, it is unclear how well known the profession is in the German population and what German citizens associate with it.

The aim of the study is to determine these aspects and the need to rename the profession.

„Der Berufstitel „Diätassistentin / Diätassistent“, der sich zu Beginn des letzten Jahrhunderts entwickelt hat und seit den 1930iger Jahren geschützt ist, ist nicht mehr zeitgemäß.“

(Forderungspapier des VDD, 06. Mai 2011 )

## Methods

- dietetic students developed a standardised questionnaire
- a national opinion poll in six cities: Neubrandenburg (NB, n=20), Münster (MS, n=40), Gießen (GI, n= 20), Höxter (HX, n=20), München (M, n=20), Nördlingen (N, n=20) (Fig. 1)
- the interviews were conducted by the dietetic students
- Monday– Friday at 3.00– 6.00 pm (19.- 29. May 2015)



Fig. 1 © fhbund.de