The top 10 Myths or Misconceptions about the Board Certification as a Specialist in Renal Nutrition

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I am sharing these with you in hopes that your will consider becoming a Board Certified Specialist in Renal Nutrition the next year or two. Please visit the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR) web site (http://cdrnet.org) for additional information and the online application.

1. **The examination for Board Certified Specialist in Renal Nutrition is too hard. I will never pass it.**
   In November, 2011, the new format was offered for the first time and 86.49% of examinees passed with flying colors. The pass fail statistics are not kept secret and you can review the data from prior tests on the CDR website. While pass rates have varied over the years the new test format has a significantly higher pass rate.

2. **The Board Certification as a Specialist in Renal Nutrition is a new credential.**
   Actually the process began in 1989 with the American Dietetic Association’s Role Delineation Study that suggested that specialty level examinations would be appropriate. In 1991, ADA conducted a Dietetics Practice Study to determine test specifications and definitions of specialty practice areas. The first examination was offered in November, 1993, so the 20th anniversary is being celebrated this year. Both Jessie Pavlinac and I, along with many others have been involved in these various processes for many years.

3. **The Renal Specialty Examination has not been updated recently.**
   In 2012, CDR completed the latest practice analysis for the renal specialty. The current test content outline was updated based on this study. The examination format was also changed and now consists of 150 multiple choice and scenario based questions. Did you know only 130 questions are scored since 20 are pre test questions? Pretesting is done to see how well items perform before they are used in the scored portion of the examination. Remember, it is important to answer all of the questions since the pretest questions cannot be distinguished from those that will be scored.

4. **The references used by the Item Writers are hard to locate.**
   First of all, keep in mind that it takes awhile for new research to be put into practice across the country. For this reason, you will find in the Candidate Handbook that books and practice guidelines are the primary reference items listed. Hard copies of the references can be borrowed from the Renal Practice Group’s Professional Resource Center, because we know books can be expensive. We have multiple copies of the most requested titles.

5. **Renal has the most Board Certified Specialists.**
   Actually, renal is lagging behind pediatrics and oncology. As of November, 2012, there
were 523 dietitians with a CSR. You can see who they are by searching for your state on the CDR website. We would like to change this trend soon and once again be on top.

6. **Item Writers are handpicked.**
   Subject Matter Experts (SME) are needed to participate in future test development and review meetings. You must be within the first 3 years of your CSR cycle. CPEUs may be earned for your efforts. If you are interested, please review the information on the CDR website and send a letter of interest summarizing your professional experience and your resume or CV to specialists@eatright.org.

7. **H and R Block administers the examination.**
   CDR currently contracts with Applied Measurement Professionals, Inc. (AMP) for examination consulting, test development and administration of the renal specialty examination. Over 100 testing sites are currently used by AMP including sites in Alaska and Hawaii. H and R Block Tax Preparation offices are frequently used in the off season as test administration sites because they have multiple computers available. At my testing site, others were taking real estate, funeral director and nursing home administrator exams on the same day. You will be allowed 3 hours to complete your CSR examination.

8. **My results will be available as soon as I answer the final test question.**
   After each exam window closes, and test items have been scored, psychometricians review performance statistics on each item in order to identify any performance issues. Candidate comments are reviewed by experienced item writers prior to final scoring and score reporting in order to revise scoring if needed for any flawed questions. So please be patient, while waiting a few weeks for your results.

9. **My compensation will not be impacted by attaining the CSR credential.**
   The 2009-2011 ADA/CDR Compensation and Benefits Surveys and specialty evaluations have shown encouraging trends. 30% of specialists received some type of incentive in the form of a salary increase. In 2011, the annual wage at 50th percentile for CSR holders was $64,900 compared to $58,000 for RD’s with no specialty certification. Be sure to let your employer or supervisor know about your plans to take the CSR exam and share your accomplishment after you receive your results.

10. **So, increased compensation is the main reason renal RDs are becoming certified.**
    The 2011 Specialty Evaluation told us that 89% of specialists indicated a sense of personal satisfaction from obtaining the CSR certification. This has been repeated to me over and over by those who have recently finished taking the examination. Each has expressed a validation of their knowledge about chronic kidney disease and the nutrition care of this patient population. Again I hope those of you reading this will give Board Certification as a Specialist in Renal Nutrition your consideration.