

Special Report: Asian Young Dietitian Network

1. Purpose of the Asian Young Dietitian Network

Organizer: Asian Nutrition and Food Culture Research Center, Jumonji University, Ajinomoto Global Communication Department

The Asian Young Dietitian Network (AYDN) was established with the idea of continuing the workshop "Let's Talk about the Future of Young Dietitians in Asia" at the Asian Congress of Dietetics (August 19–21, 2022) (photo). The central issue was whether the social evaluation of dietitians was appropriate and, if not, how to improve it. Simply put, the questions are as follows: Are dietitians' salaries high enough compared to those of other medical professionals? Is the dietitian the central figure in providing dietetic guidance to patients? Are school lunch teachers in Japan evaluated enough as teachers? Most of the answers are negative, and there is a need to consider improvement measures.

One of the reasons why dietitians are not evaluated sufficiently is probably their low research and information dissemination abilities. To become a university teacher, research and papers are generally required. The fact that there are few faculty members with RD qualifications at universities that train dietitians is due to a lack of research ability. The future of young dietitians is

also uncertain due to the lack of sufficient education for students who will become RDs in the future.

The reason there are few studies and papers on dietetics is probably because people do not realize that dietetics is a challenging subject. Many people think that dietetics is a simple science that involves just preparing meals and that there is little need for research. Is that idea correct? The core research in the field of dietetics is not just knowledge of dietetics and cooking but a wide range of fields such as medicine, food science, biochemistry, statistics, psychology, sociology, economics, and philosophy. Dietetics for the elderly is an easy-to-understand example. Providing delicious food alone is not enough to increase the appetite of elderly people who have a decreased appetite; it also involves the difficult task of motivating them to eat. Do we dietitians have the knowledge and skills to conduct such research? Unfortunately, No. AYDN was created to address these issues.



Fig 1. Photo of young dietitian workshop at the 8th Asian Congress of Dietetics 2020